

Mt. Vernon airport to invest in electrical upgrade

Airport board looks to move transformer for growth of Innovation Park

BY EMILY ROTH

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MT. VERNON — The Mt. Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners passed a motion on Tuesday night to solicit bids for an electrical upgrade to Innovation Park.

The vote was due to potential interest from an employer wishing to occupy space within the park, but before that can be achieved, a transformer would need to be relocated.

"We have a big green electrical transformer parked right in the middle of the area where we want to build a second hangar," said Airport Director Chris Collins. "And Ameren has a feeder line that runs right underneath [the Evans Aviation] hangar, and we were granted permission to build over it because it was conduit encapsulated and it runs to that green transformer right in the middle of the area where we want to build a second hangar. Then it runs ... on to our maintenance building. ... We promised that we would relocate the transformer before we built a second building down there. [Engineer] Brian Edmison drew up some plans at that point. ... The only thing that we need to kick start building is to move that transformer."

Collins explained that he



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ELECTRICAL UPGRADES — Airport Director Chris Collins looks over the agenda for Tuesday night's meeting of the Mt. Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners. Among the items of business was an electrical upgrade to the airport's previous terminal area, Innovation Park.

has received interest from a tenant who wishes to occupy the space in Innovation Park should the transformer be moved. According to Collins, the likelihood of occupancy is around 50 percent.

"If this goes forward, this is exactly the type of project that we designed Innovation Park for," he said.

According to Collins, Innovation Park was built to attract employers and create job growth within the area. While he encourages aviation companies to use the space, he indicated that others who would provide jobs in Jefferson County would be welcome.

"Innovation Park is the new southwest corridor that used to be the terminal area," said Collins. "In the early 1950s 'til about 1975, this was the Mt. Vernon Airport. And in the

early 1970s when the airport was trying to land bigger airplanes, the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] said that the setbacks were not correct for bigger airplanes to take off and land here. So everything had to be moved further back off the taxiway and runway for the big airplane wingspan and the approaches coming in and out."

Collins said, "The complex was conceived and built in, probably about '75. So since 1975 this old area has just laid dormant, weeds growing up through the cracks and building foundations that aren't there anymore. So the Innovation Park project in 2013 was that one shining moment where we got federal money to fix all of this, and we had to build one building to get it."

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