Airport Board approves adoption of hazard mitigation plan

The plan would cover grants to prepare the airport for natural disasters

BY JOSH JONES
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — During Tuesday's regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Commissioners for the Mt. Vernon Airport Authority, the board approved a resolution adopting a multi-hazard mitigation plan.

Keith Hertenstein, assistant co-ordinator for the Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency (JCEMA), gave a presentation on the final version of the plan.

"I stopped by a couple weeks ago and talked to Chris [Collins, Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Director] and dropped off the final version of our hazard mitigation plan to him," Hertenstein said. "Back in 2013, it became due for a renewal. At that time, we had Chris sign a letter of intent."

Hertenstein said Collins has filled out the necessary paperwork for the plan and they were now ready to adopt it.

"What the hazard mitigation plan allows for is any agency that adopts it and has signed a letter of intent is then eligible for funding through the grant plan," Hertenstein explained. "And that can be funded to harden critical facilities, which this facility is, especially with the agreement in the works with IEMA [Illinois Emergency Management Agency] to be a logistics hub. This will be a critical facility by that agreement alone."

Collins explained the current situation with the airport becoming a logistics hub.
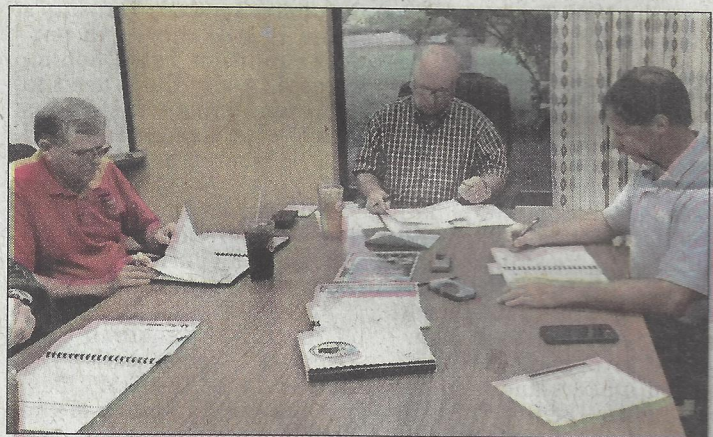
Airport:

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"We are kind of negotiating with a group called IEMA to be the main logistics base for materials and supplies that would be flowing in here from upstate and various other places from across the country in case of a natural disaster," Collins said. "And that is because of our ability to land big cargo planes and have the hangar space."

According to Hertenstein the plan would be for five years and would not lock the airport into doing anything.

"It would fall under the county and the city hazard mitigation that are in the plan for hardening the facilities," Hertenstein said. "If there is one of your own that you think might qualify under the hazard mitigation plan, you can propose it and then it can be looked at to see if it would fall under the plan."

Utilization of the plan would be up to the airport as Hertenstein mentioned the steps they would have to take if they wished to use it.

"What would happen is you would contact the county, myself or Steve Lueker [JCEMA coordinator]. We would then get with the Greater Egypt Planning Commission — they are the group that is helping us with the plan and helping to write the grant proposals with projects — and then we would go from there."

Currently, Hertenstein said they were getting all agencies including the airport to adopt the plan.

Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Board Chairman Mike Ancona noted the importance of being prepared due Mt. Vernon Outland Airport's location in case of a shift in the New Madrid Fault.

"What a lot of people probably don't realize is how Mt. Vernon airport is pretty much strategically located in southern Illinois," Ancona said. "If the New Madrid Fault were to make a major shift we would probably be the furthest northern airport that would be without major damage."

After the discussion, the Board of Commissioners approved adoption of the emergency management agency hazard and mitigation plan.

IN OTHER BUSINESS:

Before the meeting began, a moment of silence was dedicated to Jason Pearson who died in an ultralight aircraft crash on Aug. 30.

The KR Gathering will be from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. this Friday and Saturday at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

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Sentinel Photo/JOSH JONES

HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN — Board Commissioner Eddie Lee, LEFT, Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Board Chairman Mike Ancona, CENTER, and Airport Director Chris Collins were all present during Tuesday's meeting of the Board of Commissioners for the Mt. Vernon Airport Authority. Several issues were discussed including the adoption of a hazard mitigation plan.

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