

Safety concerns addressed

By **DEREK BEIGH**

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MT. VERNON — Mt. Vernon Airport will be secured by a 10-foot chain-link fence by the end of January.

Airport Manager Chris Collins said at Tuesday's airport authority meeting the \$1.2 million project is expected to begin Monday, with completion following about 90 days later.

The fence will cover the full five-mile perimeter of the airport, rather than the less than four miles currently protected, and increase its height by four feet. The east side of the property will be fenced in for the first time.

Collins said he's looking forward to the fence's completion so it can take his place as a wildlife deterrent.

"It's not so bad chasing the deer out of here when it's dry, but there are times it's near impossible," Collins said. "Every year it's gotten worse. The deer population has just skyrocketed."

Commissioner Michael Ancona stressed that the main purpose of the

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fence is security, as mandated by the Federal Aviation Administration.

"There are reasons for this beyond (wildlife)," he said.

"By the middle of January we'll have a fence around the entire airport and be secure," Collins added.

In other business, the board:

■ approved an additional \$7,370 to increase the detail of the airport's previously-announced runway evaluation project. The evaluation, which will tell the airport for the first time what its exact load capacity is, could clear the way for a new user that employs planes too large for Mt. Vernon's theoretical load capacity. Collins said recent regula-

tion changes make the evaluation yet more useful as load capacities will now be measured in a new way. That change will require many airports to redo their evaluations or accept conservative estimates;

■ accepted a bid of \$21,256 from the Insurance Store for its next year of property and equipment insurance. Collins said the low bid, \$18,852 from Arthur J. Gallagher, didn't include all the coverage necessary. Chairman Greg Martin noted that the cost will be lower than the previous year regardless;

■ finalized plans for Saturday's 15th annual Little Egypt Fly-in and Veterans Reunion at the airport. The event will coincide with the Southern Illinois Harvest Festival and include the dedication of the Jefferson County Heroes Memorial at 11 a.m. and lunch from Wilkey's Cafe. 10/12/11