

Airport hangar fees to remain unchanged

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MT. VERNON — Those who rent hangar space at Mt. Vernon-Outland Airport will not see an increase in their rental fee, the Airport Authority Board of Commissioners decided on Tuesday.

Airport manager Chris Collins had recently researched rental fees from other airports in the region and

initially suggested a hike in the fees for the local airport.

However, Collins said he had a change of heart prior to Tuesday's meeting. He said cost of maintaining the hangars has not risen sharply and he sympathizes with those battling rising fuel costs.

"These are the guys that boost our operational count," Collins told the board. "They're family."

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"Guys are flying their planes once or twice a month," added board chairman Mike Ancona, who also suggested staying with current fees.

Collins reported only two renters delinquent in payment to the airport and board member Alan Hale suggested stiffening the policy on late payments due to the fact there is a waiting list for hangar rental.

Also on Tuesday, the airport board decided to remain with its current health insurance provider while also opting for new telephone service.

It was noted that cost of the Blue Cross/Blue Shield coverage will increase over the next year.

However, board members talked of how seemingly all health insurance appears to be rising in cost. Collins recom-

mended the current plan being offered to employees.

"Although we can't pay our employees a lot of money," he said, "at least we can offer them quality benefits."

Following a report from administrative assistant Mary Barnett-Johnson, the board decided to switch its telephone service to MCI. Barnett-Johnson told the board she crunched numbers on various phone companies and found MCI could result in annual spending on phone service dropping from \$2,700 a year to \$1,140.

Barnett-Johnson added the price of long-distance service is currently 10 cents per minute, and the MCI plan offers four-cents-per-minute charges. She added that the current phone plan includes

three companies billing each month, while the MCI plan would be all-inclusive.

The board received a preliminary evaluation of the airport terminal's heating and cooling system, but took no action.

The board also discussed how a recent lightning strike damaged the airport's pilot control lighting system. Collins offered an initial estimate of \$30,000 to repair the system. The board took no action on the lighting issue — while awaiting word on whether insurance would help cover the cost — and decided to further discuss it at a meeting called for 6 p.m. next Tuesday.

In other action on Tuesday, the board approved a request by Collins to attend the

Hanson Open House in Springfield and the Great Lakes FAA Conference in Schaumburg.

The board also renewed the airport's membership in the Greater Egypt Regional Economic Development Corporation as well as the Illinois Public Association of Airports.

Collins also told the board the recent Experimental Aircraft Association Fly-In held at the airport was a success.

"We had a great, great event," he said. "I can't say enough for the sponsors and also the volunteers."