

Airport operations see increase during 2011

Authority renames entrance road Max Firebaugh Drive

BY RICK HAYES

MT. VERNON MANAGING EDITOR

MT. VERNON — Airport operations — takeoffs and landings — increased 7.8 percent during the 2011 calendar year at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

The airport had 21,254 operations in 2010, and that number increased to nearly 23,000 this past year.

During his annual aviation report presented Tuesday night, Airport Manager Chris Collins said the report is a good barometer to

measure job creation in the region.

“We had 144 pure jet operations the previous year and we went to 308, so that’s a 53 percent increase,” Collins said. “I think a lot of that has to do with economic development, job creation and job retention. I know some of it is new mining opportunities that are happening in the area and oil and gas exploration, and a surprising number of retailers. All the truck stops use our airport, a lot of the stores, and it’s not just our town, but it’s towns surrounding us that are sending the jets in here because of our infrastructure.”

Collins also said that military operations nearly doubled this past year and there are now 46 reg-

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istered aircraft, compared to 42 a year ago.

“I lay the success at the feet of our providers that put out the welcome mat well,” Collins said, adding, “When I look at 2012 with a smile on my face. These are exciting times for the airport.”

At the outset of the Airport Authority meeting, Chairman Greg Martin asked for a moment of silence in recognition of former manager Max Firebaugh, who died recently. Airport commissioners then honored Firebaugh posthumously by changing the name of Aviation Drive to Max Firebaugh Drive, pending city approval.

IN OTHER BUSINESS:

• Collins reported that the fence project, which was sus-

ended shortly before Christmas due to wet ground conditions, will restart on Monday. Collins reported that electricians have been on the airport grounds and all the lights on the fencing should be completed this week, adding, “It won’t take long to finish along the low lying areas if we get good weather.”

• The mandated extended runway project is still on hold as local officials work with a pavement engineering company to get correct Pavement Classification Number (PCN) values for the airport.

“We want to see this happen, but we want to make sure the infrastructure can handle it,” Collins said. “We’re essentially following through on what they [the Division of Aeronautics] told us to do,” he added.

• Collins also reported that Hertz Rental will occupy space in Koziara Terminal on Feb. 1.

rhayes@morningsentinel.com