

King City considered for campaign stop

Rick Santorum to be in MV Saturday; Newt Gingrich cancels scheduled stop

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MT. VERNON — At least two Republican presidential candidates have considered the King City as a campaign stop.

Rick Santorum is sched-

uled to make a visit at 5:30 p.m. Saturday at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. He will stop for about half an hour in the community hangar, said Airport Manager Chris Collins.

Santorum will make the

stop as part of a bus tour, Collins said.

"It's a fantastic opportunity, we're just thrilled," he said. "I was contacted by one of the campaign's local staffers yesterday, and we confirmed the visit with the

state campaign manager in the afternoon."

Collins said the Santorum campaign's local contact came to the airport to check the logistics of the visit and they approved the airport as a campaign stop.

The community hangar is about 12,000 square feet and will hold as many as 400 people, Collins said.

"This will be a good test of how many people can get in there," Collins said. "We can get 300 to 400 people in

there; I'd like to think we could do more if we needed to."

Republican Party Chairman Richard Stubblefield said Newt Gingrich was also

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scheduled to make a stop in Mt. Vernon this weekend, but the event was canceled.

"I was dealing with Jim Houseworth, who is a retired Air Force officer, and he called me about Gingrich making a stop," he said. "He was supposed to come through Southern Illinois, in Marion, Mt. Vernon, Effingham, ... I don't know what's happened to the plans. He is now not coming to any of those locations, and that's all I know."

Stubblefield said as he was contacted by Houseworth, he wasn't dealing directly with Gingrich's national campaign.

III and they wanted me to fill them in on the Gingrich stop. It brings attention to your community when you see the name of the town on the TV when they're covering the campaign. ... It also helps generate a better turnout any time you've got

a national candidate coming in."

Stubblefield said he hasn't heard any news about other presidential candidates who may be considering coming to Mt. Vernon, though he mentioned Mitt Romney was visiting the

midwest on Tuesday.

Collins said the Mt. Vernon airport has a long history of hosting political visitors.

He said President Obama visited the King City in 2005 when he was a senator, prior to announcing his presi-

dential candidacy.

In addition, he said George Bush Sr. visited twice in the 80s.

At least two first ladies have visited Mt. Vernon — Hillary Clinton in 1996, and Rosalynn Carter twice during President Jimmy

Carter's administration.

"With that history, it excites me that they chose our airport to have the campaign visit," Collins said. "We have this history of other campaign visits in the past, and I'm glad to continue that tradition going forward."

IV He said such campaign stops are a positive thing for the communities in which they occur.

"Any time you get a major presidential candidate — and right now, there are five major candidates with President Obama and four Republicans — any time you can do that, it spotlights your community," he said. "I got an e-mail from CSPAN,