

Board OKs county heroes memorial

Memorial expected to be
completed by Oct. 15

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MT. VERNON — The Mt. Vernon Airport Authority authorized construction of a Jefferson County Heroes Memorial on its property at its monthly Board of Commissioners meeting Tuesday.

The project, which began last fall when AMVETS contacted the board about displaying the "killed in action" sign featured at its former Main Street location, will place the sign, two benches, three flag poles bearing the American, Illinois and POW-MIA flags, and several lights in front of Outland's corporate hangar. Airport Manager Chris Collins said the hangar could eventually be renamed "Veteran's Memorial Hangar" if the memorial is a success.

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The proposal is a collaboration between Collins, boy scout Andrew Dreas and architect Brian Edmison. Dreas, who's coordinating the effort as his Eagle Scout project, found out when he contacted Edmison that he'd already designed a memorial plan for an alternate AMVETS location prior to the move.

The memorial is expected to be completed for an unveiling on Oct. 15 at the combined Little Egypt Fly-in and Veteran's Reunion and Southern Illinois Harvest Festival. Collins said contractors pushed to finish the project by Independence Day for an unveiling at the "Salute to Freedom" event, but that goal is very ambitious.

AMVETS, the VFW and the American Legion have already pledged to run fundraisers for the memorial, which will have an \$8,000 budget and solicit donations for cement, lumber, benches and other materials. AMVETS has already pledged \$100 per year for maintenance, which could be performed by boy scout or girl scout volunteers.

Collins said he and Dreas will establish a bank account for donations. In the meantime, Collins can be reached at the airport at 242-7016.

In other news, the board:

■ approved three up-

grades for its new hangar, including an increase in the size of its gas regulator amounting to \$258 in added cost, framing for bathroom walls for \$440 and an \$1,195 project to provide electricity, a water heater, exhaust fans, lights and wiring for the bathroom. The hanger is still expected to finish very close to its projected \$700,000 budget;

■ heard an update from Collins on the sale of surplus equipment. The tractor and snowblower Collins listed on eBay after last month's meeting finished \$12,000 below its reserve price of \$39,000, so the items have not been sold. Collins will bring new suggestions for sale, potentially including a consignment auction, to next month's meeting;

■ accepted full fiscal re-

sponsibility for September's 3rd Annual Midwest Light Sport Aircraft Expo, now sponsored by Plane and Pilot magazine. The expo was previously a joint venture with the Jefferson County Development Corporation, Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce and the City of Mt. Vernon, which bowed out despite the event's growing success. The funds that had been apportioned for this year's expo will be placed in a proprietary fund under airport control;

■ approved the lease for Donnie Wilkey's restaurant at the airport, which will open April 22 after hosting the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce's April luncheon on the 21st. The lease will run for one year and offer airport customers greater flexibility than the

airport's previous restaurant, which was often closed late in the day and on Saturdays.