

# Report shows airport back on course

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MT. VERNON — In May 2005, the board of commissioners of the Mt. Vernon Airport Authority painted a bleak picture of the state of the airport.

One year, a multitude of policy changes, a new airport director and renewed public and professional relationships have put the airport back on course and its picture back in focus, according to the annual State of the Airport report.

Chairman Alan Hale presented the report Tuesday night during the annual meeting of the Mt. Vernon Airport Authority, which both reflected on the past and looked toward the future.

"Gentlemen, we have accomplished quite

a bit over the past year," Hale said. "I am very proud. I am very, very proud."

The State of the Airport opened with a statement contained in the 2005 version of the document.

"It is difficult for anyone with an ounce of community pride to announce these next few words: The Mt. Vernon Airport is at this very moment an embarrassment to the community it serves," according to last year's statement.

"... Historically, we now stand at our air-



Alan Hale

port's lowest point. May we all pledge to never forget how we got here, and may we all pray to never return."

The statement went on to highlight the accomplishments of the past year and the "remarkable journey" that led to a more fiscally sound organization, growth within the community and the industry and ongoing capital improvements.

Among the accomplishments listed in the 2006 State of the Airport are:

- The hiring of Chris Collins as airport director.
- Signing two lease agreements filling vacant showcase corporate hanger/office facilities.

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## Airport Report:

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- Working on the completion of a \$1.1 million runway revitalization project on the main runway.
- Installing surge protection devices throughout the airport's electrical distribution system, which reduced the amount of lightning damage and drove the cost of insurance downward.
- After discovering a key part of the airport's infrastructure in near complete failure, an aggressive sanitary sewer lift station repair project was launched. With the exception of main pumps, which were nearly new at the start of the project, all components of the lift station were replaced, along with a new electrical control panel.
- Reconnecting with the city of Mt. Vernon, Jefferson County Board, Jefferson County Development Corporation, Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development, Mt. Vernon Fire Department, Mt. Vernon Police Department, Rend Lake College, Federal Aviation Administration, Midwest Regional Office and Illinois Department of Transportation Division of Aeronautics.
- Vacating and obtaining demolition permits for two

non-productive residential properties owned by the airport to reduce liability.

● Signing long-term office lease with Prudential Investments.

● Retiring a \$175,000 capital projects debt by selling surplus airport property, which paid the debt and increased the account balance by \$9,500.

● Purchasing a new Air Rescue Fire Fighting/Rapid Intervention Vehicle for the airfield — the first new ARFF/RIV in 31 years — which will be used in mutual aid with community emergency services.

● Groundbreaking on the new Air-Evac Super-Base April 27 at the Airport Lake Business Park.

● Reviewing requests for proposals for a new fixed base operator.

"We conducted in-depth interviews with five excellent companies who expressed interest in doing business at our airport. A major announcement will be made very soon concerning this subject," the statement says.

● Finishing the year "in the black" for the general operating account for fiscal year 2005 -2006 with no intrafund transfers.

"It's been quite a while for this one," according to the statement.

"Chris [Collins] is particularly proud of that, and I am proud of him for that," Hale said following the announcement.

As part of the annual meeting, the board of commissioners elected its officers for the upcoming year.

With no discussion, the board quickly and unanimously voted to keep the board the same.

The officers are Hale, chairman; Mike Ancona, vice chairman; Greg Martin, secretary; and Paul Dickerson, treasurer.

Newly appointed commissioner Gary Chesney will attend his first meeting in June.

Following the business of

the annual meeting, the board addressed its monthly agenda.

The board gave Collins permission to enter into contract with Mt. Vernon.net for wireless Internet service should the need arise while Air Evac is in its initial phases.

Collins said it was possible Air Evac would not need the service, but the action gives the airport director the authority to approve the contract should Internet access become necessary.

An RC Jet Rally scheduled for September through Illini-Jets will not be held at the airport, due to scheduling conflicts.