

Update given on airport solar power project

*Airport is currently
sending out requests
for proposal*

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MOUNT VERNON — The Mount Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners recently heard an update on the ongoing plans to have solar power at the airport.

According to Sentinel archives, the topic was first brought to the board in September, where they were advised of the Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SREC), which is a state incentive awarded by the Illinois Power Agency for organizations and businesses to develop solar energy. The project is estimated to be around a \$1.2 million job, which includes the purchase of the solar panels, replacing a 21 year old roof for the panels to be placed on and other energy conservation methods. The credits are estimated to cover \$300,000. Mount Vernon Outland Airport Director Chris Collins explained the overall goal of the project.

“We are looking at completing a debt neutral capital improvement program that over a long term will save the airport a lot of money,” Collins said.

Collins said that they are currently moving forward with a request for proposals for a company to handle engineering, construction and financing. The airport is also planning to form a committee to investigate the project more. He said currently three accounts contribute 75 percent of the airport’s utility bills including the Koziara Terminal, all the airfield lighting and the community hangar. Collins said they are going to offset that bill and target 90 percent usage.

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“We want to find a company that will finance this capital project, through the money we pay Ameren every year,” Collins said. “If you look back and you see with our budget, we are usually somewhere around \$80,000 to \$83,000 a year that we are paying out of utilities. So imagine 90 percent of that bill is used to finance this project, we would own all of it and ultimately after about 11 to 12 years, it would be paid for and then we wouldn’t have that pay-

ment coming out to pay for the project anymore and now we are truly into the black.”

Collins said that they have been advised that the solar panels have a 25 year life span, with energy efficiency beginning to degrade after that, but could still possibly operate up to 30 years and beyond. He explained that the hope is to have proposals some time by the end of February.

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