

Airport discusses impact of COVID-19

Fuel sales have seen a drastic decrease

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MOUNT VERNON — As COVID-19 continues to impact everyday life, the Mount Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners was recently updated on what impact the virus has had on the airport.

Mount Vernon Outland Airport Director Chris Collins said that he is saddened to say that activity at the airport has dropped significantly due to COVID-19, including the Bonnie Cafe being closed, no longer having soccer games at the fields and a lack of business meetings.

"I am not sure the public knows exactly how much goes on at the airport, inside that terminal, but it is a very active place seven days a week and because of COVID-19 it is not presently," Collins said.

Collins explained how air traffic has been impacted.

"The United States Military has a 60 day no-fly order, unless it is absolutely something essential," Collins said. "All automotive lines are shut down, so cargo operations have ceased. There is little bit of activity in the flight school, but most of the tenant base is not flying, they are adhering to the stay at home and social distancing."

Collins said that you could almost count on one hand the amount of business flights that they have had and the same could be said about flights out of the airport.

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Sentinel File Photo

AIRPORT IMPACT — The Mount Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners was recently updated on what impact COVID-19 has had on Mount Vernon Outland Airport. Fuel sales and flights are down as the airport anticipates receiving \$30,000 from the CARES Act.

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"This has translated to about a 75 percent decrease in fuel sales, which is how we make a portion of our living at the airport," Collins said. "We were on track to sell 100,000 gallons this year, I am not sure we are going to break 100,000 now. Up until March 15, we had sold about 87,000 gallons of fuel and we were on track for 100,000. I don't think we are going to get there, because of the lack of clients."

The airport's fiscal year is from May 1 to April 30. Collins said as far as day to day operations, he is concerned with what is going to happen with Personal Property Replacement Tax (PPRT) receipts, which are distributed to various organizations including the airport.

"With businesses closed, especially restaurants, that PPRT is going to be significantly reduced moving forward, for at least a couple of months. That is one of our biggest line items

in our budget," Collins said. "It doesn't impact us in this fiscal year, it is about to end this month, but it certainly will with the fiscal year moving forward."

Collins explained that on a brighter side, the recently approved CARES Act will help airports across the country.

"The FAA announced (Tuesday) \$100,000,000 of emergency relief funding to all airports across the nation," Collins said.

The money is divided up depending on which category an airport lands from an FAA asset study. The categories of airports include national, regional, local and basic.

"National airports get \$157,000, regional gets \$60,000, local gets \$30,000 and the basic gets \$20,000," Collins said. "We fall under a local airport, so we are going to receive \$30,000 from the CARES Act. We are very grateful that money is going to come in, that should shore up the shortfall in the replacement tax."

Collins explained that airport hosts various activities and events and it is difficult to no longer have those events for the community.

"It saddens me to not see people, we love activities and people at the airport and it is hard to not see that," Collins said. "We are going to get through this, it will end and we will get back to normal, but it is having an impact."

IN OTHER BUSINESS:

- The board discussed its options regarding a solar power system at the airport.

- The board accepted a bid of \$7,409 from Barcom Security of Swansea to upgrade the Koziera Terminal fire alarm system. They had a total of six bidders for the project.

- The board agreed to move forward with selling the airport's 1996 Ford Bronco XLT and put those funds towards the purchase of a new courtesy vehicle. Collins said that they will look at different avenues to sell the vehicle.

- The airport has completed various maintenance projects at the facility including clearing trees, ditch work, re-carpeting the terminal banquet room and more. Collins said that all of these projects were handled by their own workers.

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