

# Airport project hits potential hurdle

*Officials positive situation will be resolved*

**BY JOSH JONES**  
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MOUNT VERNON — During the recent meeting of the Mount Vernon Airport Authority (MVAA) Board of Commissioners, the board was informed of a potential funding issue regarding a major lighting project at Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

According to Sentinel archives, the MVAA has been planning a major lighting replacement project that includes replacing lights on the primary runway, the cross runway and the taxiways at the airport. The project was initially estimated at \$1.96 million, with a \$98,000 local share.

"This one is becoming a little bit more difficult than what we thought, because the lighting circuits are as old as I am; they date to the late '60s," said Airport Director Chris Collins. "We have had irregularities. If you are a pilot you have seen it. You've got this one (runway light) is glowing really bright, this one is low and this one is the middle somewhere. It is just all over the road, and that is why that needs to be replaced."

Collins explained the situation the airport is facing.

"The issue that we are having, with all of the cost increases with everything the last year, year and a half, now we are way over budget to replace all the lights and all of the signage," Collins said. "IDOT (Illinois Department of Transportation) is saying they want the signs taken out of there so we can get somewhere close to the budget. They want that to be a separate project, and they washed their hands of it and threw it over here."

Collins said that the electrical engineer on the job found guidance that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has a mandate regarding the signage.

Please see **Airport**, Page 2A

## Airport:

*Continued from Page 1A*

"The distance remaining signs, those are the big box ones that say four, two, five up and down the runway, that lets the pilot know how much runway is ahead of them or behind them," Collins said. "And you've got the taxiway signs, there is a guidance sign there. The new regulations say that those have to be on the runway light circuit, not on a standalone or on a taxiway circuit. Ours are on a taxiway circuit."

Collins said those signs have to be in the runway circuit now.

"If we go forward and (do) not take care of this, then we have got a mismatch problem. Now we are going to have LED taxiway lights that draw almost nothing, with these 1968 taxiway signs that draw a tremendous amount. Will they even work at all?" Collins said. "So we have a got a problem here."

Collins said that he has spoken with those involved in the project to see if the airport needs to lobby or what they need to do.

"Stayed tuned on this. If IDOT says, 'No, don't have money for that, do what you have to do,' then I am going to make a call to the Chicago airport district office," Collins said.

Collins said that the aged lights and signage have not gone unnoticed by the FAA.

"The last five FAA inspections they have noticed that lighting difference out there," Collins said, later adding, "I think we have got a problem, but I think it is fixable. ... We are going to get it fixed and it is going to be interesting getting there."



Sentinel File Photo

**LIGHTING PROJECT — The Mount Vernon Airport Authority (MVAA) Board Commissioners was informed of a potential funding issue regarding a major lighting project at Mount Vernon Outland Airport. Airport officials are positive that the issue will be resolved.**

### IN OTHER BUSINESS:

- Lieutenant Colonel Steve Willis was announced as the newest member of the Illinois Aviation Hall of Fame, and EAA Chapter 1155 is receiving the Spirit of Flight award. Both Willis and the chapter will be recognized on June 16 in Champaign.

- The board heard updates on other ongoing airport projects.

- The annual audit report presentation did not take place, due to a lack of a presenter.

- A public hearing was held regarding the intent of the MVAA to issue \$1,428,000 in general obligation limited tax airport bonds. No one spoke during the hearing.

- The airport approved a quote of \$4,209 from Electronic Architechs of Mount Vernon to upgrade from a 16-camera system to a 32-camera system.

- The board approved a \$32,800 quote from Amerikooler for a walk-in cooler/freezer.

- The board approved a \$50,000 fund transfer to the airport's flight-line account.

*jjones@morningsentinel.com*



**Chris Collins**