



MVAA hears State of the Airport

Fuel sales were a highlight for the year

BY JOSH JONES

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MOUNT VERNON — The Mount Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners heard the annual fiscal year 2021/2022 State of the Airport report during Tuesday's meeting.

Airport Director Chris Collins noted that the report covers the fiscal year of Mount Vernon Outland Airport, which is May 1 to April 30. The report began by recognizing that the airport was selected for Air Evac Lifeteam's Regional Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) Air Ambulance Base.

"Each year, KMVN (Mount Vernon Outland Airport) based Air Evac 11, is forced to cancel flights due to the weather being below vi-

sual flight rule minimums. The new IFR base will utilize a twin engine Eurocopter EC-135 IFR Helicopter," the report states. "Specially trained crews, using the aircraft's digital automated flight control system (AFCS), will be able to fly safely when the weather is IFR (less than 1,000 feet ceilings/three mile visibilities). Air Evac 172 will be temporarily located at Innovation Park Hangar 1 at 100 Firebaugh Drive. The permanent location will be con-

structed at 500 Firebaugh Drive."

Collins commented on working with Air Evac.

"We have been like old friends, no problems at all," Collins said.

The report next focused on the Illinois Aviation System Plan-Economic Impact Analysis. The Illinois Aviation System Plan, completed by Mesa, Arizona based Kimley-Horn, determined the total economic output of Mount Vernon Outland Airport at \$40.2 million and total jobs

at 278 (when all impacts and multipliers are applied). Both metrics have essentially doubled since a similar study was published in 2012 (\$18.9 million annual economic impact and 149 jobs). With a \$335,000 annual tax levy, airport officials are proud to mention that for every dollar invested via property taxes, the airport returns \$122 to the local economy.

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"That is about a once-a-decade opportunity for all the airports, not just Mount Vernon, but all the airports across the states," Collins said. "We contracted with Kimley-Horn after the study was over to develop a brochure where we highlighted the tenant base a little more than what their work had done. ... They were able to do some things outside the scope of just a simple brochure for us with a regional classification study at the airport and made some phone calls and had some meetings on our behalf. Reaching out to them on that brochure provided some additional dividends to us."



Chris Collins

Rebuild Illinois was also highlighted as in December, the airport was notified its Rehabilitate Koziara Terminal Parking Lot Project was selected for the Rebuild Illinois Campaign. A total of \$94 million will be split between 96 projects across the state. The airport will receive \$918,000. Airport officials were thrilled the KMVN project was selected as funding via traditional means would have been difficult or cost prohibitive.

Collins said while the airport is excited that they were selected, the project appears to be a while off.

"Those projects are all stalled and I think a lot of it has to do with Division of Aeronautics personnel. They are severely understaffed and have far too many projects to even dive into the Rebuild Illinois projects," Collins said.

Collins said that he expected pre-design meetings for the KT parking lot project to start in late summer.

Mount Vernon Outland Air-

port based Applied Research and Development Laboratory (ARDL) achieved two large contracts during the year. In late May, 2021, an \$11.6 million contract was announced by the United States Army. A \$49 million contract was announced by the United States Army Corps of Engineers in late April, 2022. ARDL offers environmental and industrial laboratory services, on-site engineering and consulting, and research and development. The company is staffed by highly trained scientists, engineers, and technical specialists serving private sector clients, as well as local, state, and federal government entities. ARDL is the airport's largest employer.

"We are always excited when one of the team members succeed," Collins said. "That first contract was very large and then that second one came in. I am just thrilled for them. ... Any time we can bring outside funds to this area, we should all be striving for that and ARDL has just done that."

The Bonnie Cafe was another business recognized for its positive impact on the airport as the report states that Bonnie Café continues to be one of the area's most popular dining establishments. As Southern Illinois' only on-airport restaurant, its drawing power extends across state lines. The Bonnie Aviator's Club, a promotional program targeting repeat aviation operations, collected 49 member cards in calendar year 2021. Each card represented a regionally based aircraft owner/operator that visited a minimum of five times.

"I think we have become the gathering spot for our community," Collins said. "We are just so blessed to have Bonnie Cafe here. There has been a tremendous amount of people coming here and that is what we have wanted since we have been here."

Total operations at the airport increased 9% over the previous year (26,692 in 2021 as compared to 24,560 in 2020). Total based inventory is 46 (34 Single Engine Land, five



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multi-engine land, one jet and six helo). The count includes one new jet, two new turbo-prop, and two new cirrus SR-22 aircraft. 102,943 total gallons of aviation fuel were sold marking the second consecutive year the six-figure goal was achieved. Corporate Aircraft Association member aircraft, those only stopping for quick turn fuel services, accounted for approximately 17% of total annual sales.

"It is tax revenue for our community and most of that is coming from outside. We burn fuel here locally, our local pilots, but not to that tune," Collins said of the fuel sales. "With the exception of airline service, the airport is doing everything it can to serve its residents as well as the travelers and businesses across the nation."

Board Chairman Marty Cox said that he was impressed with the major contracts at ARDL, the various programs and businesses at the airport as well the total gallons of aviation fuel that was sold during the fiscal year.

"The board of commissioners are very pleased with the State of the Airport and we are anticipating another excellent year," Cox said.

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5-13-2022