

Airport eyes new hangar project

The project is in the preliminary stages

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MOUNT VERNON — The Mount Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners recently approved for Airport Director Chris Collins to begin the process for a new construction project dubbed Hangar A-1400.

Collins explained that he was approached by a team of local aviators regarding aircraft storage needs.

"This team is energetic, enthusiastic and experienced. One gen-

tleman is flying every day and the other is flying every other day," Collins said. "They have some expansion ideas for the future, which would include additional pilots and additional aircraft and some are significant aircraft."

Collins said that these ideas are great for Mount Vernon Outland Airport and the community, but currently they do not have a site for it. He said it is a perfect fit for the upcoming Hangar 2 and 3 projects that will be a part of Innovation Park, but other projects have to conclude before those hangars can be built. Collins noted that the Hangar 2 project cannot start until Air Evac

Please see **Airport**, Page 3A

Joint Base Jefferson County is completed and Hangar 3 is nowhere near ready to begin yet.

"We are very in tune to their (the prospective tenants) needs, we don't want to see them go to a neighboring airport or across state lines and we have to move and we have to move fast," Collins said.

Collins said that they have found a site on the airport grounds that is near shovel ready.

"That is between the terminal and the first large building to the south, which is currently occupied by Kash Helicopter," Collins said.

Collins said they are hoping to have this project completed by summer 2023.

"We have very little site work and very little ramp construction at that site. Whereas the Innovation Park has a considerable amount of ramp or concrete work to be done with them, which costs a lot of money," Collins said.

Collins said the project is really preliminary and cost estimates were not available. He said right now they are looking at an 85 foot by 85 foot building, which breaks down to approximately 7,225 square feet.

"It will house aircraft and potentially up to two aviation companies operating inside of it," Collins said.

Collins said that he believes this hangar would meet the current immediate needs of the team of aviators, but also believed they would be housed there temporarily.

"We think that this team of local aviators will outgrow this building in two years," Collins said. "Then we talk about Innovation Park Hangar 2 for them."

Collins said that the airport is planning for the hangar to be designed so it can be used for future attraction purposes.

"Because it is going to have a large door facing the parking lot with the roadway going right to it," Collins said. "We think it would be a very attractive building for future tenancy and occupancy here at the airport and it is right next to the terminal."

Collins said that there are a lot of elements at play as they are getting started.

"I am looking more at this team and how excited that I am that we have aviators in the community that want to grow their business through

aviation," Collins said. "That is a rare thing these days. Our job is to help them expand their business, because they are going to add that economic output that the airport is very proud of and that shows on the sign out front the \$40.2 million (economic output in 2020) and those numbers don't climb unless there is employment and businesses located at the airport. ... Any time we have the chance to attract more businesses to the airport we give everything we got."

IN OTHER BUSINESS

- The airport will receive \$292,000 in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding for 2023. Collins said it's his goal to use that money to fund the crash fire rescue truck and replace the maintenance building.

- The airport has set a record for jet operations this year, with 352 operations conducted as of Thursday.

- The board approved an additional \$5,165 for soil borings from Holcomb Foundation Engineering in Carbondale for the Air Evac Joint Base Jefferson County project.

- The board approved \$8,500 for Hanson Professional Services to do the studying and designing of new lighting for Firebaugh Drive and for the Air Evac Joint Base Jefferson County

project.

- The Illinois Department of Transportation approved design estimates from Hanson Professional Services on the runway and taxiway light project. The project is on the April IDOT letting. Collins said it is possible the project could happen in the fall of 2023.

- Jax Asphalt completed the taxiway crack fill project.

- Collins recognized Matt Clovin for converting the airport's sweeper onto a backhoe, which helps the airport to clean the runways better. He also recognized Clovin for clearing a major amount of brush north of the lakeshore shelter.

- The airport approved a wildlife agreement with USDA for \$12,000.

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