

Updates given on airport projects

Joint Base Jefferson and A-1400 hangar projects were discussed

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MOUNT VERNON — The Mount Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners recently heard an update regarding ongoing projects at Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

Mount Vernon Airport Director Chris Collins gave an update on Joint Base Jefferson and the anticipated dates. According to Sentinel archives, the base will house aircraft and crews from both Air Evac Lifeteam 11, currently located on Aviation Drive, and Air Evac Lifeteam 172, temporarily located at 100 Firebaugh Drive. The base is to be constructed at 500 Firebaugh Drive in the airport's Innovation Park. Air Evac's new home places it near the center of the airport and adjacent to the primary runway. The new location not only provides safer arrivals and departures during VFR (Visual Flight Rules) conditions, but meets all requirements for IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) approaches during poor weather conditions.

"The bid package will be available on Jan. 23, there will be a pre-bid meeting on Monday, Feb. 6, and the bids are due Thursday, Feb. 23," Collins said.

Collins said the exhibits the airport had to provide to Air Evac prior to construction have all been delivered.

"They had a couple of minor things we had to change, but we should come out on the other end of this thing very soon and get bids advertised, bids received and hopefully break ground in March/April," Collins said. "Working with Air Evac has been great, it just took a lot of time to get through all of the speed bumps that were put in front of us."

Collins said that he is excited to see this project get close to starting.

"We are a consistent top five finisher in the amount of flights nationwide, the Mount Vernon base is," Collins said, later adding, "It really

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excites me to see what is going to be coming in the future. They put a sizable investment here and I am looking forward to working with them for another 20 plus years."

Collins said that he was able to meet with one of the partners regarding the A-1400 hangar project. According to Sentinel archives, Collins was approached by a team of local aviators regarding aircraft storage needs. Currently, officials are looking at an area between the airport terminal and the first large building to the south. If everything goes as planned, the hangar would house aircraft and potentially up to two aviation companies.

"We just have a lot of bugs to work out with this project, but I am pleased with where it is at," Collins said.

Collins said that he met with the Greater Egypt Regional Development Commission about an Economic Development Assistance (EDA) grant.

"The EDA grant would be 50/50 (matching) ... 50% local and 50% federal government," Collins said. "They also explained the Community Development Block Grant program, that could be \$25,000 per employee. That is something that we might pursue also. We are doing investigative work to see if we would qualify for that one too and what are the mechanisms to achieve that."

Collins said that he enjoys the airport playing a role in incubating businesses and

watching them grow. He gave an example of Kash Helicopter Services as they approached him over a decade ago with just two people.



Chris Collins

"Now they (Kash) have more than 10 employees and four helicopters," Collins said. "SRT Aviation is another example where three guys from St. Louis came to Mount Vernon and now we have got one of the busiest and experienced shops on this end of the state with an FAA certified repair station license and it all started with something small."

IN OTHER BUSINESS:

- Air Evac Lifeteam 11 set a company record for flights in October and a celebration was held. The exact number is not being released at this time.

- The board approved its property and equipment insurance policy with Guy Wood Insurance at a premium of \$30,719, an increase of \$855 from last year. Collins said all the values across all the buildings and equipment increased by 10% and new equipment was added to the policy.

- The board also approved its public officials liability insurance from Dimond Brothers Insurance at \$2,358, the same premium as last year.

- The airport's new sweeper helped keep the airport runway open after the snow received in December.

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