

## Any changes will require Air Evac's approval

BY JOSH JONES

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**MOUNT VERNON** — The Mount Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners voted to rebid the Air Evac Joint Base Jefferson project after recent bids came in higher than expected.

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.

Mount Vernon Outland Airport Director Chris Collins explained that the bids were opened on May 18, with a special meeting called to go over the bids on May 23. The airport received a total of three bids.

"The low bid was Johannes Construction at \$2,362,000, the next bid was Bevis Construction at \$2,369,000 and the third bid was from H.E. Mitchell Construction at \$2,713,300," Collins said.

Collins gave his thoughts on the bid amounts.

"Considering our budget was \$1.8 million, the low bid was a half million over our budget," Collins said. "We are experiencing sticker shock to say the least."

Collins said that Architect Brian Edmison presented a schedule of values during the special meeting, which offered an itemized comparison between estimates and the bids.

"He was able to compare the low bidder's estimate to his estimate," Collins said. "There were some

things that were very similar and some things that were just way higher than what he had estimated and some of the numbers are shocking."

Collins said that the plan is to rebid the project with value engineered options.

"We are going to have a meeting with Air Evac. We haven't had that yet, we are going to do that next week," Collins said. "We are trying to maybe eliminate some scope, change some scope, anything we can do to get that number lower."

Collins said one item that they are looking at adjusting is the heated floor/ramp specs that is used during the winter to make sure that aircraft remains ready and no doors are frozen



Chris Collins

# Airport to rebid Joint Base Jefferson project

shut during an emergency.

"Our engineer alternative to that was for not the entire ramp be heated, but the section where they pull the helicopter out," Collins said. "Brian (Edmison) had obtained estimates for that when he calculated his overall budget and the low bid contractor's numbers were way higher. ... Probably what will happen is the next bid will have a regular heating system in the building, but an alternate for floor heat, that way we can separate it out."

Collins said the bottom line is they are going to work to get the project as close to \$1.8 million as possible.

"We realize that materials are high and we are in uncharted waters when it comes to projects and building ... but if we can get the number closer to \$2 million I think we can move forward," Collins said. "We are going to make it happen, it is just taking



Sentinel File Photo

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a lot longer than any of us wanted."

Because the project is being rebid, an exact time frame was not available.

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