

Airport moves forward with two major projects

Air Evac and FBO building project bids were both approved

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JEFFERSON COUNTY — Mount Vernon Outland Airport has been making progress on two major infrastructure projects.

Recently, the Mount Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners approved a bid of \$1.9 million from Evrard Company of Marion for its Air Evac Joint Base Jefferson project. A total of three bids were received for the project.

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. Because the bid came in higher than expected, the airport had to reduce 2,400 square feet from the hangar along with other items to lower the overall cost.

"Although our budget was \$1.8 million, because the other bids were in excess of \$2 million the first time and two of the three this time were more than \$2 million, with \$100,000 being over budget and we eliminated a lot of scope," said Airport Director Chris Collins. "We needed to accept this, no one likes to accept a bid that is in excess of their budget, but now five of the last six bids were more than \$2 million, so we thought \$1.9 million was worthy of strong consideration."

Collins said that in order for the project to move forward, an addendum was needed to be signed by Air Evac and has been sent to their desk.

"I have the addendum done, it has been forwarded to Air Evac, we are waiting for Air Evac to sign it, once the addendum to the original lease is executed by both parties then the contract between the Airport Authority and Evrard will be executed and we will have a groundbreaking," Collins said.

No firm timeline on the project was available.

"I am excited. Air Evac plays a major role in not just our community, but the entire southern third of the state," Collins said. "Of course Air Evac 11, the visual flight rules base is in the top five of the nation across all air ambulance providers. There is no doubt that this is a tremendous asset to Southern Illinois and I am going to be very happy to see that base being constructed and operational."

The Airport Authority board also recently approved a bid of \$144,000 from Bevis Construction for the Fixed Based Operations addition project. Evrard Company was the second bidder at \$179,000. Collins said that Architect Brian Edmison talked to Bevis Construction about certain parts of the project.

"Bevis had like \$20,000 in automatic doors and they had some windows that were what Brian considered fairly expensive," Collins said. "It was his recommendation to accept the bid with the removal of the doors and windows and we accepted \$120,000 of their \$144,000 bid and the airport would buy the doors and windows. The original budget was \$133,000, so with the removal of the doors and windows, now we are below our intended budget."

Sentinel archives state that the board began to look at the addition after noticing how much traffic they were getting from pilots. Collins said that the FBO building



Chris Collins



Sentinel File Photo

BIDS APPROVED — The Mount Vernon Airport Authority recently approved bids regarding the Air Evac Joint Base Jefferson project and the Fixed Based Operations addition project.

acts as a "front door" for pilots to Mount Vernon and Southern Illinois and is a first impression to many pilots and passengers.

"It is our front door to the world and we are very dated there at the moment, it still looks like the mid-1970s over there and I am excited to see that project fulfilled and look a little bit more modern and more professional for our visitors," Collins said.

Collins said he estimated both projects to start in the winter.

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