



Sentinel File Photo

**AIR EVAC BASE** — Construction of the new Air Evac base at Mount Vernon Outland Airport is nearly complete, and crews should be able to move into the building by Christmas. Pictured are the local officials who took part in the November 2023 groundbreaking ceremony for the new base.

## Air Evac base project nearing completion

*Mount Vernon Airport is also moving forward on solar initiatives*

**BY TRAVIS MORSE**

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**MOUNT VERNON** — Construction of the new Air Evac base at Mount Vernon Outland

Airport is nearly complete, and crews should be able to move into the building by Christmas, said Airport Director Chris Collins.

"It's Air Evac's finest facility across the country," Collins said of the new base, also adding, "Evrard, the contractor, built a very nice, functional building and we're very happy with the way it turned out."

Air Evac Lifeteam provides emergency air medical transportation services, operating more than 150 helicopter air ambulance bases across 18 states, according to the Air Evac website.

Collins gave an update on the new Air Evac base project at the Mount Vernon Airport

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### Airport:

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Authority Board of Commissioners meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 10. He said that once the carpet work is finished and an internet issue is resolved, likely in the next week or so, then Air Evac should be able to move into the new facility.

Air Evac Lifeteam Joint Base Jefferson County is a new base that will house aircraft and crews from both Air Evac Lifeteam 11, currently located on Aviation Drive, and Air Evac Lifeteam 172, which is temporarily located at 100 Firebaugh Dr. The nearly finished new base is being built at 500 Firebaugh Dr., in the airport's Innovation Park.

Last fall, the MVAA Airport Board approved a \$1.9 million bid from contractor Evrard Company, of Marion, for construction of the new base. The official groundbreaking for the new facility was held in late November of 2023.

Air Evac's new home will place it near the center of the airport and adjacent to the primary runway. The new location will not only provide safer arrivals and departures during VFR (Visual Flight Rules) conditions, but will also meet all requirements for IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) approaches during poor weather conditions, Sentinel archives state. The new base is a "first of its kind" facility for Air Evac, since the organization has never had a joint base in the Mid-

west before, according to previous remarks by Joe Grygiel, vice president of operations for Global Medical Response, the parent company of Air Evac.

There were some funding disputes pertaining to the base's construction, but those issues were resolved after a project meeting between the architect, airport officials and the contractor. At issue was a \$27,000 difference in what the parties felt was owed to the contractor, Evrard, Collins said. There was an issue with the large aircraft door, and there was a section of the ramp where the concrete was bad, and these issues led to the \$27,000 discrepancy, Collins said.

"Both sides were at a \$27,000 difference, which in a \$2 million project, is not a lot of money," Collins said. "Both sides were pretty dug in and we met in the middle. The airport and Evrard, the contractor, settled on the discrepancy."

The airport conceded and paid Evrard \$13,500 of the \$27,000 discrepancy, Collins said.

"Both sides were dug in, it would have headed to mediation if we didn't concede," Collins said. "So instead of going to mediation, we extended that olive branch to Evrard and settled that."

Also on Tuesday, Collins gave the Airport Board an update on the different solar projects that the airport is pursuing.

In September, the airport awarded a \$419,547 bid to Sun Solar to install and create a solar panel system at the airport. The

panels will be placed on the two hangars south of the airport's terminal — Hangar A-1100 and Hangar A-1200 — and officials expect the solar panels to save the airport about \$28,000 a year on energy costs for the Koziara Terminal, a 60% savings. Collins said that he expects construction on these solar panels to begin after the first of the year.

In addition, the airport is pursuing another solar panel project involving THangar-800. That project would alleviate utility bills for the airfield lighting circuit and the Fixed Based Operations building.

According to Collins, the Airport Board has approved moving forward with the THangar-800 solar project, as long as the cost-per-watt of the panels is equivalent or very close to what Sun Solar is charging for the other panel project.

**Other Airport Board actions Tuesday included:**

- The board heard an update on the parking lot project. All the asphalt work is done and crews are waiting for warmer temperatures to complete striping and seal coating work.

- The board heard an update on the runway and taxiway lighting project, which has essentially been completed.

- The board renewed with Guy Wood Insurance for the airport's property and equipment insurance. Starting Jan. 1, the new premium cost is \$38,993, which is roughly a \$2,755 increase over the prior cost.

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