

**East Hampton Airport
Work Session Statement
February 4, 2014**

Background

The Town Board is committed to openness in town government as the Board and the community focus on East Hampton Airport. As we tackle the issues at the Airport, it is our intent to work together to ensure trust as well as establish a system of transparency, public participation and collaboration.

First and foremost, the Town, as proprietor and operator of the Airport, is committed to operating a safe and properly maintained facility without cost to taxpayers. The Town is also committed to addressing the community's concerns about noise; as noise from helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft have interfered with residents' peaceful enjoyment of their homes.

It is the Board's intent to develop a plan for the Airport that addresses four components that are intertwined...

1. Operating Finances
2. Noise Abatement
3. Operations
4. Infrastructure and capital financing

Finances

With regard to Operating Finances, the Board is committed to a professional and objective financial analysis of the Airport. This analysis will be thorough and will focus on operating expenses, including maintenance, as well as current revenue, prior revenue trends, possible new revenue streams, and leases at the Airport with a focus on obtaining reasonable estimates of airport net cash flow under various operating scenarios.

Arthur Malman, Chair of the Budget & Financial Advisory Committee (or the BFAC) has agreed to have the BFAC conduct this analysis. A resolution will be offered at Thursday's Board Meeting that tasks the BFAC with the financial analysis, and calls for additional members to augment the committee. Those members include Frank Dalene, David Gruber, Gene Oshrin, Pat Trunzo, and Tom Twomey, who have been selected for their financial expertise and knowledge of airport operations. These five gentlemen will work along-side Bonnie Krupinski and Peter Wadsworth, long-standing members of the BFAC. Arthur Malman will chair the committee while Airport Manager Jim Brundige and I, as Airport liaison, will participate as well.

Once the potential cash flow of the airport is determined, we can then determine how much money is potentially available to pay debt service on bonding for airport capital projects. Please note that what those capital projects will be are not the purview of the BFAC.

Ultimately the financial analysis will help guide the Board on how the Airport can best be financed in the future – either self-financing or through FAA subsidies, as it is the Board’s desire to have it operate without cost to taxpayers.

While the goal of the BFAC is to complete the main financial work by the Spring, the appointing resolution will state that the five adjunct members’ terms will expire in approximately six months.

I believe this is a great opportunity for the Town given the BFAC’s demonstrated competency with regard to Town finances. Also, and significantly, it brings together for the first time the major opposing voices on both sides of the Airport debate.

Noise Abatement

With regard to noise abatement, the Town will move forward with a technical noise analysis with the intent to pursue use restrictions at the Airport. To this end, a resolution will be offered at Thursday’s meeting to hire DY Consultants to help draft an RFP to hire a professional firm that will analyze operations and noise data so that the Town can narrowly define the noise problem for the purpose of identifying potential methods for addressing it. This could be a major step forward in managing aircraft noise.

Operations and Capital

Maintenance at the Airport has been virtually ignored. Improvements are needed – both routine and capital – to sustain a safe facility. Last December the prior Town Board adopted a five-year \$5.3 million Capital Improvement Plan and a \$5.2 million Airport Maintenance Plan (with fifteen projects outlined) with very little input from the community.

Airport Planning Committee

Therefore, as a result of the need for noise data and a better public review of both the Capital and Maintenance Plans, I will be offering a resolution at Thursday’s meeting to appoint an ‘Airport Planning Committee’, which will consist of two sub-committees. Namely –

1. Figures in the Aviation Community
2. Noise Abatement Advocates

I am recommending a bicameral approach, as it is my belief that this will allow us to have an orderly process whereby the committee members who are invested in the Airport will have an opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions. I have found this approach very productive during my nine-year tenure on the Springs School Board.

These two sub-committees will each be charged with drafting a plan for the Airport that addresses – noise abatement, operations, and capital. The two sub-committees will work on parallel tracks. Once consensus is reached, the committee will work together to build final consensus.

Sub-Committee for Noise Abatement Advocates

The sub-committee for noise abatement advocates would draw representation from the former Airport Noise Abatement Advisory Committee, Quiet Skies Coalition, Northwest Alliance, the Village Preservation Society, and the Committee to Stop Airport Expansion.

The members of this sub-committee have already agreed to serve and will be included in Thursday's resolution.

Sub-Committee for Aviation Community

The sub-committee for the aviation community would draw representation from the Pilots Association and the Fixed Base Operators.

I am still awaiting confirmation from some of the members who will potentially serve on this sub-committee, so it is likely that members will be appointed in a resolution at the February 20th Town Board meeting.

Conclusion

To conclude, the purpose of utilizing two citizen committees – namely the BFAC and the Airport Planning Committee – is to allow the Town Board to:

1. Operate a safe and efficient airport serving the East Hampton community,
2. Resolve the noise problem that has remained unaddressed for 30 years, and
3. Determine whether the airport will be self-financing or continue to rely on FAA subsidies.

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