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November 24, 2014

Honorable Larry Cantwell, Supervisor  
Town of East Hampton  
159 Pantigo Rd.  
East Hampton, NY 11937

Dear Supervisor Cantwell;

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is the world's largest aviation membership association. AOPA represents the interests of general aviation aircraft owners and operators, including nearly 11,600 in the State of New York. The Association is committed to ensuring the future viability, safety and economic development of airports and facilities serving general aviation as a vital part of a state and national transportation system. Airport development and operation must be conducted in a fair and reasonable manner without economic hardships and in accordance to Federal requirements.

The Association has continued to hear from members regarding the ongoing issues of noise complaints as well as efforts by some to either significantly restrict or even close the East Hampton Airport (HTO). Over the past few years, we have continued to read consultant studies regarding noise impacts and minutes from Town Council meetings regarding the airport.

AOPA is aware of a number of lawsuits previously filed as well as recent threats for additional litigation. We understand the Town is reluctant to accept additional federal funding for necessary airport improvements and maintenance projects since such action would extend Federal grant assurances. In all of this though, one thing is certain; lawsuits have a significant financial impact and drain local government resources. Lawsuits divide the community and cause hard feelings between all parties.

We certainly understand the concerns expressed by local communities regarding aircraft noise and overflight paths. However, AOPA does not believe that additional litigation will be in anyone's interest.

It appears to us that to date, there have been a series of public meetings held by town officials. We applaud this effort. However, in all of these meetings, there is significant bias by all sides in what the appropriate solution would look like.

We would like to suggest to the Township that the town seek out the services of an independent third-party mediator who has no direct ties to any of the individual local factions. The mediator would call together representatives from each of the interested parties to come to the table and attempt to find some middle ground. In nearly all issues, there is almost always middle ground. Meeting with small groups around the table at the same time may just be a vehicle to find that middle ground.

AOPA hopes that you will give adequate consideration to the idea of mediation in this long-running dispute about the airport. We are prepared to assist the Township if needed.

Sincerely,

Bill Dunn

Vice President, Airports