

Remarks by David Gruber, East Hampton Town Board meeting, January 20, 2015:

Mr. Supervisor, Town Board members, good morning. My name is David Gruber. I am the chair of the Airport Planning Committee, Noise Sub-committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present to you the committee's final report and recommendations, the result of its work over the past year.

Before I begin, I want to extend my thanks to the members of the committee who have worked diligently over the past year, meeting bi-weekly, researching, reading, and writing to fulfill your charge to them, to offer, from the point of view of residents both in East Hampton and in neighboring communities who are adversely affected by airport noise, a comprehensive plan for the airport that addresses noise issues, safety issues, financial and economic issues, and airport infrastructure. They are: Vice-chair Tom MacNiven, former Town Councilman Pat Trunzo, Kathy Cunningham, Charles Ehren, Frank Dalene, Jim Matthews, Dan Voorhees, Peter Wolf, and several members from Southampton, Bob Malafronte, Barry Holden, and Southampton Councilwoman Christine Scalera.

I also want to express our gratitude to Councilwoman Kathee Burke-Gonzalez, our Board liaison, who has been tireless and incredibly patient and persistent. I do not believe we could have reached this point without her support.

Noise due to aircraft using East Hampton Airport has vexed this community for more than 30 years. The Phase I noise study, presented to the public on October 30 of last year, made clear that every flight by aircraft arriving at, or departing from, our airport at some point projects noise onto a residence that exceeds the limit set forth in East

Hampton's own noise ordinance. There are 30 million such exceedances annually, half during the day and half at night, affecting homes as much as 10 miles and more from the airport in almost every direction. Overwhelmingly, these exceedances are due to the noisiest types of aircraft, helicopters and jets.

The Phase II analysis of the 24,000 airport noise complaints logged this past year confirms that the problem of airport noise is overwhelmingly due to helicopters and jets. Jets generate complaints per operation at a rate nearly two and a half times that for other fixed wing aircraft. Helicopter complaints are at a rate nearly two and half times that for jets, that is nearly six times the rate for other fixed wing aircraft.

Aircraft noise is not regulated under the Town's noise ordinance because the Town is forbidden by federal law from regulating aircraft in flight and because FAA grant assurances prevented the Town from exercising its authority as airport proprietor to manage airport access in order to control noise. As of January 1 of this year, the relevant grant assurances no longer apply. This means that the Town has now recovered its authority to regulate access to its own airport so that aviation will not be a burden on the general community.

Over the past three decades, this community has repeatedly expressed both its support for the traditional use of the airport, by pilot-owned, recreational aircraft, and its desire that the airport not become a commercial airport. But the airport has become a dominantly commercial facility because, with airport access under control of the FAA, the Town had no ability to do anything about it, until now.

Of 13,000 landing operations last year, fully 2/3 were by commercial operators. Of the remaining 33%, only 1/3 were operations by private pilots with aircraft based at

East Hampton. That means that only 11% of total operations are today those of the local aviation community that the airport has traditionally served and is intended to serve. Commercial operations are far and away the predominant source of noise because commercial aircraft are the noisiest types.

The professional noise analyses identified three acute problems: first, operations in the evening, night, and early morning, second, high frequency operations, particularly on summer weekends and holidays, by the noisiest types that turn out to be chiefly commercial aircraft, not recreational aircraft, and, third, helicopter operations. Helicopters produce the greatest distress for people on the ground. As we know from the public meeting last August, attended by nearly 400 people, it is not an exaggeration to say that hundreds of homeowners are literally distraught about helicopter noise and what it is doing to their lives.

In response to the identification of these three problems, the Noise Sub-committee has proposed three sets of rules, one directed at each problem: for evenings, nights and early mornings, a curfew, with shorter operating hours for noisiest types of aircraft, for high frequency operations by noisiest types, a limit of one trip per week and a noise surcharge on summer weekends and holidays, for helicopters, the complete exclusion of the noisiest types and the exclusion of other helicopters on summer weekends and holidays. Recreational flying is almost unaffected by these rules as almost no recreational aircraft are classified among the noisiest types.

On the basis of careful analysis of airport operations, we believe that our proposed rules will achieve simultaneously four critical objectives. They will: (1) achieve immediate, substantial noise relief for residents, (2) allow sufficient traffic to maintain a

financially self-sustaining airport, (3) provide an incentive for airport users with noisiest types of aircraft to transition to quieter types in order to avoid restrictions, and (4) affect only very lightly recreational aviation, the intended and traditional use of the airport. Since all but a very few of recreational aircraft are classified amongst the Noisiest types, the vast majority will only be affected by the curfew.

In all cases of noisiest types -- helicopters, jets, and turboprops -- there are quiet alternatives available, as quiet or quieter than the light aircraft for which the airport was designed. Some of these quiet types operate at East Hampton now. We believe it is time for the Town to ask all airport users to employ the best, quietest aviation technology so that they can enjoy the benefits of aviation without destroying the quiet enjoyment by residents of their homes, gardens, and the beaches and open spaces that are our common property.

Thank you. If there are questions at this time, I would be happy to answer them to the best of my ability. Otherwise, I submit to you this report on behalf of the Noise Sub-committee.