

EastHamptonPatch

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Op-Ed: The Price of Preservation is Eternal Vigilance

Quiet Skies Committee chairman readies for hearing on accepting FAA money for a deer fence at the East Hampton Airport.

By [Barry Raebeck](#)



What is the East End of Long Island? Why do so many consider it so special, and what makes it such a tremendous place to live and work and play? It is special because it is different. It is different because for many, many years its most stalwart and forward-looking citizens have fought to protect its natural beauty and bucolic lifestyle from the incessant onslaught of creeping commercial interests.

This issue is simple on the East End: some people consider the natural beauty and resultant lifestyle a blessing to be preserved--while others look upon those same resources as potentially lucrative capital projects.

The sole reason the East End is still beautiful and remarkably well preserved is because each and every major development initiative has been defeated.

Without such resistance, without our eternal vigilance, there would be: 1) housing developments all through what is now preserved woodlands at Barcelona Neck, Hither Woods, Cedar Point, and Mashomack; 2) no farmland at all, no Long Lane Preserve, no

Town Lane Preserve in Amagansett, no Sagaponack or Wainscott potato fields; 3) hotels on the bay at Three Mile Harbor and the ocean at Napeague; 4) houses all through the dunes of East Hampton town; 5) Amagansett would have lost its charm and heritage; 6) there would be a highway through Scuttlehole, Sag Harbor, East Hampton, and Amagansett; 7) car ferries from Connecticut would dock in Montauk, etc., etc., etc.

Every major environmental initiative out here was decried as "bad for business," "anti-capitalist," "bad for locals," and so on. In fact, it was the environmental initiatives that maintained the quality of life and dramatically increased the value of land. The environmentalists have actually been the Best Friend of Business. The developers were wrong then, and they are still wrong.

Which brings us to East Hampton Airport. Operators and profiteers maintain that we (re: they) "need" Federal Aviation Agency money in order to maintain a safe and necessary airport. But the airport is no longer a small, regional, recreational airport serving single engine planes and amateur pilots--despite the anachronistic signs showing propeller-driven planes floating through pristine skies. Those days are as gone in East Hampton as the Model T on Main Street. The airport as it currently exists is not "necessary" at all. No, it is merely convenient--to the hedge fund moguls, Hollywood celebrities, and their lawyers. The airport in summer is a major metropolitan jet and heliport. It is the antithesis of what the East End is all about for those who truly love it and once again want to see it preserved.

On Dec. 1 at 7 p.m. in East Hampton Town Hall, the Republican-led town board will hold a "hearing" regarding acceptance of \$450,000 of FAA money for a deer fence. Yes, a deer fence. (But the airport has a \$1.5M surplus right now. True.) You see, they want the money not for the "fence," but because accepting it will maintain FAA control of EHA for the next 20 years. And that means promotion of all things FAA-friendly, which means destruction of all things East End-friendly.

Those who care for the East End will be there in force to stop expansion of the airport. We will be singing the patriotic song of preserving what is best, and we will be bringing eternal vigilance to bear.

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Quiet Skies Committee