

"East Hampton Airport Committees To Be Formed"

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Trying to get a hold on East Hampton Airport issues right out of the gate, East Hampton Town Councilwoman and airport liaison Kathee Burke-Gonzalez said the Town Board will appoint committees on Thursday, February 6, to analyze the airport and plan for its future.

At the town's work session on Tuesday morning, Ms. Burke-Gonzalez revealed plans to conduct financial and technical noise analyses this spring with the help of board-appointed committees, all with the intent of developing a plan for the airport that addresses operating finances, noise abatement, operations, infrastructure and capital financing.

The financial analysis, she said, would focus on operating expenses, including maintenance, current revenue, prior revenue trends, possible new revenue streams and leases at the airport. She said the focus would be on obtaining reasonable estimates of airport net cash flow under different operating scenarios.

The town's Budget and Financial Advisory Committee and additional people, including Frank Dalene, David Gruber, Gene Oshrin, Pat Trunzo and Tom Twomey, are going to do the analysis, which is slated for completion by the spring, Ms. Burke-Gonzalez said.

"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," she said. "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 [Federal Aviation Administration] subsidies, as it is the board's desire to have it operate without cost to taxpayers."

Also on the town's plate is the ever-contentious issue of noise abatement. To tackle this, Ms. Burke-Gonzalez said a professional firm—the job will be put out to bid—would look at operations and noise data so that the problem can be pinpointed and resolved through restrictions.

Two committees will be formed to advise the town on the airport's operations and capital. According to Ms. Burke-Gonzalez, the five-year, \$5.3 million capital improvement plan and \$5.2 million airport maintenance plan were both adopted in December without much input from the community.

Creating the new committees is the new Town Board's way of including members of the public in improving the airport, she said.

The Airport Planning Committee will consist of two subcommittees made of figures in the aviation community and noise abatement advocates.

The advocates would represent the former Airport Noise Abatement Advisory Committee, the Quiet Skies Coalition, Northwest Alliance, the Village Preservation Society and the Committee to Stop Airport Expansion.

The town is still firming up those who will represent the aviation community, but hopes to appoint members from the Pilots Association and the Fixed Base Operators.

Once a consensus is reached, these members will be responsible for coming up with a plan to reduce noise and to handle operations and capital, Ms. Burke-Gonzalez said.