

## **Airport Analysis**

East Hampton

October 3, 2011

To the Editor,

Last week, as reported in your Sept. 29 edition, Supervisor Wilkinson and his cohorts at Town Hall attempted to foist upon the public three new fabrications about the airport.

First, they tell us that if the town does not accept Federal Aviation Administration subsidies for airport repair and reconstruction, then East Hampton taxpayers must foot the bill.

There is no basis for this attempt to scare the community. The current town administration, while bragging incessantly about its fiscal reform, has hidden the facts of airport finances every bit as much as the McGintee administration did. Moreover, it has never done a real analysis of how airport revenues, existing airport surpluses (perhaps as much as \$1.5 million), and business-like borrowing could make the airport self-sufficient without subsidy from the F.A.A. or the taxpayers. When the risk is that effective noise control, such as curfews, goes out the window with acceptance of F.A.A. grants, one would expect a business-like administration to have carried out such an analysis.

Such a financial analysis is exactly what the Democratic candidates for the town board have proposed, along with a moratorium on F.A.A. funding until the results are in. The Democrats deserve great credit for that sensible, business-like position.

Town Hall's second fabrication, as per the Star's report, is that the town would not gain anything by refusing F.A.A. grants. They allege that an aviation lawyer has advised the town that, even without the contractual restrictions associated with the F.A.A. grants, the town would have to seek F.A.A. approval to impose curfews in a process said to be extensive, time consuming, and costly, suggesting millions in legal expenses,

It is hard to believe that those were, in fact, an aviation lawyer's unadulterated conclusions because the only process for such F.A.A. approval, called a Part 161 Study, is required only of municipal airport owners when they have or want F.A.A. money. Both the City of New York and the Village of Southampton, without having F.A.A. money, have imposed curfews and other regulations on their helicopters without Part 161 Studies.

With no need for a Part 161 study, the town can easily show that curfews and related restrictions on access are reasonable and necessary for the protection of this community.

Much of the evidence already has been gathered by the airport management and outside consultants.

The third new fabrication from Town Hall is the supervisor's statement in your recent edition that he does not want to expand the airport but that it should be maintained as is.

The trick in that statement is that it refers only to the physical plant at the airport. The real issue, as the supervisor knows, is the expansion of the noise that comes from expanding traffic. Without the town imposing mandatory regulations such as curfews, the expansion of traffic will continue unabated and so will the noise.

It is about time our town fathers started leveling with the community.

Sincerely,

CHARLES A. EHREN JR.