

Not Flight Paths

Wainscott

September 3, 2012

Dear David,

Last Thursday night at 11:04 and 11:29 p.m., and the next “morning” at 5:03 and 5:17, our sleep was broken by East Hampton Airport aircraft noise. For thousands of East End residents, most summer days begin and end with invasive aircraft noise.

Beginning in the last century there has been an organized attempt by members of our community to ameliorate unwelcome aircraft noise and pollution. It has only gotten much louder, more noxious, and more widespread. Last year at the December meeting in East Hampton, the town, the pilots, and airport officials swore that things would improve this summer, merely by bringing in a “control tower.” We said, “We doubt it. It is more likely to get worse.”

We were right. And they said, “Oh, you just want to close the airport,” as if that were some inconceivably wicked scheme.

We said, “No, we want to fix it, not nix it.”

We were wrong. We should have said, “Yes, of course we would love to see it closed. We hate it. It doesn’t do us any good at all. Why wouldn’t we want to close it?” Local pilots should be aligning with us, not against us.

The problem is not flight paths. The problem is aircraft and the absolute disregard for this community that many aircraft operators and officials demonstrate. (See editorial in *The Star* last Thursday.) So long as discussions revolve around flight paths the central issue is ignored— just as hell-copter operators and jet owners and sea plane passengers wish it to be.

The airport manager, Jim Brundige, is a shill for commercial operators, a former hell-copter pilot himself, who has shown disregard for many of those who pay his salary. He is a large part of the problem. Putting him on a solution “committee” is akin to asking the fox how best to protect the hens.

At our rally on Friday several things were noted:

1. The people passing by in their vehicles who indicated any response were in favor of what we were doing by 4 to 1.
2. The aircraft idling on the tarmac produced fumes blown at us by the prevailing winds, fumes that were so toxic we could smell them on Daniel’s Hole Road. I began to feel sick, and my throat started to hurt.
3. One of the airport users asked a citizen, “What is your problem?” The citizen replied, “We are trying to protect our community.” The user spewed, “I don’t give a fuck about your community.”

The solution is simple, either insist that all airport users abide by civil curfews commensurate with the normal working day (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.), insist that all operators maintain maximum altitudes when over residential areas, as on Martha’s Vineyard, for example — including hell-copters spiraling way up and down, as they are designed to do, rather than glide-path approaches, monitor the toxic impact of emissions, and maintain 24-hour management presence to enforce this — or close the airport once and for all.

Moving the flight paths has already been done multiple times, and accomplished nothing. The problem is not flight paths. The problem is the way the airport is presently being used by people who refuse to recognize that much of the rest of the community despises their loud, wasteful, dangerous, noxious, and obnoxious behavior. If East Hampton Airport were closed tomorrow, life for most of us would improve dramatically.

BARRY RAEBECK