

June 30, 2012

All of our worst expectations seem to have been realized. Written By T. James Matthews of the Quiet Skies Coalition and of Northwest Alliance

Town Board Member Dom Stanzione, Airport Manager Jim Brundige, and control tower manager, Charles Carpenter very pointedly said that the purpose of the control tower is promote safety and efficiency, NOT noise abatement. Most of the meeting was about pilot technicalities but talking with Bruce Miller, one the tower controllers, it became clear that the tower will not have any influence over the pilots selection of routes from the three options, Northwest Creek (inbound), Jessup's Neck (outbound) and Georgica Pond (in and outbound). Further, the altitude that the pilots maintain is entirely up to the pilots and NOT the control tower. The FAA rep, Dean Marshall stated that If the pilots violate rules, they must be reported to the FAA offices in Farmingdale and they may get anything from a phone call to a 30 day suspension, which they can appeal. So despite what we were told would be a possible solution to the noise problem, the operations of the tower do not have the authority to address noise issues and there is no longer any intention to deploy the tower for reduce abatement. In short, the only relief for us will come from flight restrictions that we can only hope to impose by rejecting FAA funds and reestablishing local control of the airport.

All of this was foreseen in a particularly well informed and well reasoned editorial in the **Easthampton Star** this week: To wit:

Air Traffic Control - We have our doubts

June 27, 2012 - 11:57am

East Hampton Town's big experiment with an airport control tower began this week as the operators flipped the switches on their communication equipment and radar for the first time. Though the tower is billed as a way to control the routes by which aircraft enter and leave a 4.8-mile radius around the Wainscott runways, and thereby limit noise annoyances for residents, we have our doubts. Bets are that it will not make the noise problem any less, though it may move it around a little bit.

Helicopters, which prompt many of the complaints to the town's hotline, are just plain loud, wherever they fly. Jets' takeoffs and landings are going to rattle windows and nerves no matter what. And, seasonally staffed tower or none, the only way to reduce the aggravation of many residents is to limit the hours that certain kinds of aircraft can use the facility.

Such restrictions are anathema, of course, to those who make money from transporting high-paying passengers or provide refueling, cleaning, or other services for private jets. Some owners of small aircraft based at East Hampton Airport have been swept up in the opinion vortex, paradoxically siding with the for-profit operators, putting them to some degree at odds with their own best interests as their once-quiet home field becomes ever more commercial.

By improving safety, the tower, which is being paid for with money from the town budget, may have the unintended consequence of actually increasing use of the airport at night and in bad weather. No one yet knows for sure. This is indeed an experiment worth watching closely.