

Likely to Increase

Wainscott

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Dear Editor:

From the extended discussion of the aircraft-noise problem that has appeared in The Star, seven key points clearly emerge:

- The noise generated by aircraft coming to and leaving East Hampton Airport amounts to a heavy tax imposed by the few who fly on the many who suffer. It takes from many the quiet enjoyment of their homes and their leisure so that a few may get to and from their homes more swiftly.

- East Hampton's most precious and distinctive asset is its tranquil beauty. No one comes here because the town is a transportation hub, an industrial center, or a cheap labor market. Noise pollution is an assault on our most valuable asset.

- Whether or not recent statements about the economic contribution of air traffic to the community are accurate, they completely fail to take account of the real but unquantified costs that airport activity impose on the community.

- Redirecting flight paths may redistribute the noise but it will not diminish the aggregate amount of noise or the harm it does to the community. Requiring planes to fly at specified altitudes will not solve the problem. Even high-flying helicopters produce a racket that prevents quiet conversation among those below. And, whatever altitude aircraft may come in at, they have to come down to ground level if they are going to land.

- It has not been shown that establishing a control tower at the airport would reduce the aggregate amount of noise. On the contrary, by making the airport more attractive to pilots and capable of handling more aircraft, a control tower is likely to increase the amount of noise.

- So far, it appears that the only practical way to reduce air-traffic noise, short of closing the airport, is to limit the number of flights — particularly on summer weekends when the traffic is heaviest and the adverse impact on outdoor rest and recreation is most severe. Restricting the types of aircraft that can use the airport (e.g., excluding private helicopters) could help. Further, a tolerable limit could be put on the number of landings and takeoffs per day and the specified number of landing permits could then be auctioned. It could be expected that those who will pay for airplanes in order to save a couple of hours on the Long Island Expressway or the railroad will bid up the price of landing permits to a level that would richly compensate the town.

- If the citizens of East Hampton want to gain control of their airport so as to protect themselves and their property from the damage done by air traffic noise pollution, it is imperative that the town decline to receive any more federal airport funding — whether for deer fencing, control towers, runway extensions, or anything else. Receiving such funding would mean that the policy for East Hampton Airport will be left in the hands of federal authorities whose mission is to encourage national air transportation. Accordingly, East Hampton should have a town board made up of members pledged to reject federal funds.

ROBERT RIFKIND