

Public Hearing Transcript - Airport 2-9-2022

Theodore Kusnierz

Our third public hearing of this afternoon is to consider a proposed amendment, an extension of the East and West facilities airport leases with North American Flight Services Incorporated through December 31 2061. And at this time again, ask the Clerk to call the roll to establish a quorum for the public hearing.

Bridget Rider

Supervisor Barrett.

Phil Barrett

Here.

Bridget Rider

Butler.

Eric Butler

Here.

Bridget Rider

Connolly.

Eric Connolly

Present.

Bridget Rider

Edwards, Gaston.

Tara Gaston

Here.

Bridget Rider

Grasso.

Joe Grasso

Here.

Bridget Rider

Hammond.

Mark Hammond

Here.

Bridget Rider

Kinowski. Kusnierz.

Theodore Kusnierz

Here.

Bridget Rider

Lant.

John Lant

Here.

Bridget Rider

Lawler. Ostrander.

Scott Ostrander

Here.

Bridget Rider

Peck.

Bill Peck

Here.

Bridget Rider

Raymond.

Jean Raymond

Here.

Bridget Rider

Richardson. Schopf.

Jonathan Schopf

Here.

Bridget Rider

Smith. Tollisen.

Kevin Tollisen

Here.

Bridget Rider

Kevin Veitch, Matt Veitch.

Matt Veitch

Here.

Bridget Rider

Winnie. Wood. Wright.

Mo Wright

Here.

Bridget Rider

Quorum is present.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you very much. And I would also ask the Clerk to please read the notice of the public hearing in the record.

Therese Connolly

Take notice that pursuant to Resolution 39 of 2022 the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing on February 9, 2022 at 4:40 pm, or as soon thereafter as the Board can convene, in the Meeting Room of the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors at 40 McMaster Street, Ballston Spa, New York 12020 for the purpose of considering proposed amendment and extensions of the East and West Facilities Airport Leases with North American Flight Services, inc. through December 31, 2061. Take further notice, that at this hearing, all persons wishing to speak will be heard. Written communications may be emailed to publiccomment@saratogacountyny.gov, or by mail addressed to: Clerk of the Board, Saratoga County Board of Supervisors, 40 McMaster Street, Ballston Spa, NY, 12020, which public comment must be received by February 9, 2022 at 3:30 pm.

Additional information regarding the proposed amendment and extensions are available in the Office of the Clerk of the Board and online at www.saratogacountyny.gov.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you. And at this time, we have 10 individuals that have signed up and wish to speak. For anybody just joining us a reminder, per the rules of the Board, individuals will have three minutes to speak. Please state your name and address for the record and the Clerk will keep track of the time. First individual signed up to speak is Carol Hackert. I believe I'm reading that correctly.

Carl Hackert

Good afternoon Carl Hackert.

Theodore Kusnierz

I'm sorry.

Carl Hackert

That's alright. Carol's a nice name though. If I had a daughter that would be. 38 Dublin Drive Ballston spa, I got my private pilot's license at Saratoga County Airport 32 years ago. And it's part of the reason I moved to Ballston Spa was because I wanted to be near an airport because I always knew I was going to be a pilot. When I had the time and the money. And with my business, I incorporated flying into seeing all my customers in upstate New York and our factory down in Pennsylvania. So it was very, very useful for me to save time and to get places that I needed to get to. Some of the information that has come out in the last year or so with respect to Governor Cuomo's improvements of airports all around the State of New York indicate that airport development and improvements are great for economic development, and Saratoga airport, under the current FBO, North American flight services, has done a wonderful job on the improvements in the county just to be commended for some of the things that have occurred. I visited the airport, I landed there last Fall a couple times and I noticed a lot of things. So I went there today to see what it was like in the winter. Because winter and snow removal are always an issue. And the fencing, the security, the condition of all the buildings, including the former Richmor facility was great. So this proposal to add more hangar space as a pilot, I can tell you is really helpful because the more you can keep aircraft and do operations inside rather than outside, the safer the condition of the airplanes operating out of there are going to be. So I saw most airplanes, only one airplane was actually tied down outside and that was temporary. So there's no runway expansion talked about in this proposal. The airport celebrated its 80th birthday last year. It was built and commissioned during World War 2 1942 for national defense purposes. And the county does derive money from the FAA to make continue to making improvements grants are constantly going back and forth. I believe that this is a it's a sound project, I do think as a businessman to think about spending almost \$7 million of private capital for hangar space would require a long time to collect that money back. And so I don't think that the extension to a 40 year lease is unreasonable to cover that cost, also they are improving aprons and so on. So if you haven't been out there and see the operation, I think you should well do it. If you're opposed to this project, go take a look for yourself. I think you'll rest easier at night. The only complaint that I have ever heard is noise. And there is no helicopter operation at 10:30 at night and there's no jets, no commercial traffic of any sort is going to be coming. No commercial jets, commercial jets. Thank you.

Theodore Kusnierz

Sir, your time has expired. Thank you for your comments. The next member of the public is Kevin Purstell.

Kevin Purstell

My name is Kevin Purstell, 5 Pinewood Court, the Town of Ballston. I'm an FAA licensed airframe and powerplant mechanic with inspector authorization, commercial pilot with instrument multi-engine rating. I'm telling you that because I know a little about aviation, and I have spent a lot of time at the airport. I've worked there since 2012. It's a wonderful place. They do a good job of maintaining the airport, I think it's a gateway to our community. I'm also a member of this next door app on my phone and I see what's going on in that I kind of want to debunk some of the things that I see. Because I'm sure that people are going to bring that up that this is an airport and they're not expanding the airport, they're just looking to extend a lease here. And they're trying to make money. And hopefully it'll add some stability

and maybe give me a job so I can work there for a longer period of time. And if these people want to invest money, and I would think it's a good idea to extend their lease. In fact, traveling around the country, the places that I've gone to they give 99 year leases at airports, not 40 year leases, because if you want people to invest in equipment and infrastructure, you've got to give them a way to get that money back. So I'm for it. And thank you for your time.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you for your comments. Next individual is Jon Zilka.

Jon Zilka

Jon Zilka, 405 Greenfield Avenue, Ballston Spa, here on behalf of North American, which is my family business. Yes, we were looking for a 40 year extension of our lease, so that, coincide that with building a new hangar to better meet the demands and needs of our customers. There are dozens of operators that come in and out regularly. And they all come to me directly and they say hey, we need more hangar, we need hangar, we need to be inside. So we are moving forward. We'd like to move forward with that. We will privately fund it. So that way, it doesn't cost anybody any money except ourselves. So that these airplanes can come in, we can put them in the hangar, and they don't have to go in and out of the airport regularly to pick up and drop off the passengers. There are people who may think that the airport is a terrible thing and that it pollutes the air, and it pollutes the noise around the neighborhoods, and that we're going to extend the runways and that the helicopters are terrible. And this is the other thing, the airport is an economic engine and an economic driver. And it's a viable tool for anybody and everybody who travels via air, it is an air-port. So helicopters are part of it, as well as midsize business jets and large business jets and small business jets and single engine pistons and multi engine pistons. So we are looking to invest in the future of this airport. And I just want to say that my office is always open for anybody who ever wants to come and sit down and learn about how and why and what airplanes and helicopters do. I obviously fully support this and if anybody would like to come and chat with me and learn more about anything to do with aviation, my door is always open. Thank you for your time.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you very much. The next individual is Dave Burton.

Dave Burton

Dave Burton Rowlands Hollow West. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at today's public hearing. I know my comments will reach my neighbors, my friends, and my family. But I hope you all listen to what I have to say. It's important to me to stay I am not against the airport. I never intended on scrutinizing every action. My involvement in airport relations and activities is the effect of county decisions, county actions and county inactions over the past eight years. For those who might be unaware, a long term or forty year lease arrangement is always used when a significant airport development is anticipated. The goal is to shift a significant portion of the risk and development away from the taxpayers and to private sector leasee as proposed in this arrangement. On the surface this appears to be good for all of us big savings right won't cost us a dime. This 40 year lease is the next step to privatizing our public airport. With privatization, profit will be the heart focus leaving no room for incompatibilities. I'm okay with profit. Just not the methods and hardships our community has been

forced to face for similar gains. Deforestation, property flooding, increased noise, land grabs, and in my opinion, something I find profound and disturbing. The killing off of an endangered species on airport grounds. Our county has gone to great lengths to secure the airport's future, first by accepting FAA money that obligates them to take our land or classify us as incompatible. And maybe now that business dictate our own existence. It appears the adopted measure for economic growth isn't counting for environmental costs, or how these costs impact the wellbeing of society. I'm not going to claim to be an expert on economics or suggest I have a solution. I can only hope we are all considered valuable when weighing the cost and deciding on how much is enough. I have one request. Please follow up with your airport tenants, review their sub lease agreements and enforce our own County code that states all sub lease agreements require written permission from the County. Thank you.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you very much. The next individual is Tony Licata.

Tony Licata

Thank you appreciate the time. I know this topic is only about the lease. So I may be outside the subject of the lease because what's being built inside the airport is affecting us. I'm really against this lease because they have six years left on their lease right now. Why is the rush all of a sudden to give them 40 more years? The rules that you put into effect that you wrote down. Do you have paper and pencil everyone? Because I want to give you the rules that you put in your master plan. Okay, on page 15 look at it, 20 page 64 and page 83. Are you not getting permission for the helicopters? You have let the most dangerous helicopters in the world, the Robinson 22 Robinson 24 flying around our neighborhoods and our playgrounds. If you need proof of this, check the FAA. We're not making any of this up. Also, on your subleasing program article 125, a subdivision a written agreement is required. We FOILED this, you know what we were told? There isn't one. Strange, isn't it? And on December 3, each and every one of you got a letter from us, and not one of you responded, not one. But apparently either your lawyers or somebody read it. Because our concerns were put into the new lease, I find that strange. You do not know what's going on at that airport. These are your rules that you put in, and you're not following them. What's going to happen over 40 years. But tell me if you can't follow up on these things that you put in writing. It's an open book. We're letting the helicopters in, sublease that, well maybe we will have go-kart racers with the (inaudible) down the runway. You know, do what they want. And the sad part is the Town of Milton gets nothing. The Town of Milton gets very little out of all this. The airport, the (inaudible)'s going to get it. More hangars, more airplanes more helicopters. more gas equals what? Money. That's what it was what to get. So I think you should back off and just 40 year at least for a while. And sit back and look what you're not enforcing right now. If any of you want to contact myself and Dave Burton, we will give you, we have the facts, we have them written down. Last but not least, I want to take the time out and thank our new Supervisor Scott Ostrander. It's a pleasure that he's back in office. But most of all, on September 21st. He stood here and he backed the residents of Milton. And that means a lot that he has our back. He's against expansion, These hangars are expansion. And also, he requested an advisory board. Did you do that. yet? Did you put advisory board into effect, he requested it in his letter.

Theodore Kusnierz

Your time has expired Sir.

Tony Licata

Okay, thank you.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you for your time. Next individual we have signed up to speak is Sharon Licata.

Jonathan Schopf

Mr. Chairman, I'm gonna call in, I have to go.

Theodore Kusnierz

Okay, Supervisor Schopf is excused.

Cheryl Licata

Cheryl Licata 4 Kebab Lane Ballston Spa, New York. I'm his other half. I have to wonder how a 40 year lease will benefit the County. Who benefits from this? Supposedly, I know that Mr. Zilka wants to get a return on his investment that he's looking to make at the airport and 40 years will probably about cover that. But when does this clock start ticking? Does he want to start this now? I think somebody said April of this year? Or do we wait the six years and finish out the lease we currently have. I'd like to focus a little bit of interest on the income to the county. We're currently getting on the east side, which is where the terminal is 5500 bucks a month. Pretty good. I guess. That's a great big building a terminal, a lot of buildings over there. After 15 years, it's going to go to \$5,788 says two years from now. And that'll end the 20 year lease. The new year lease was stated from you guys, your attorneys to be determined on the amounts. But the original East lease was projected by North American to be on a sliding payment schedule, with approximately 5% increase every five years. So for 35 to 40 years, by the time the 40th year hits it will be about \$8,000 a month. I would like to know who decides these numbers. There must be some sort of a computation, square footage or something and we can't really find out how this number is determined. But I'd like to know the answer to that. The West Lease which is the old Richmor building is fairly, I guess, they put in their proposal \$1,525 a month. Again, I couldn't find out how they came up with that number. But I guess that's what they wanted to do. So they decided that the 40 year lease for that property will stay there for 40 years. That's their proposal. Let's keep the rent for 40 years. I would like my taxes to stay the same for 40 years. Anyway, one of the other little things I noticed on the lease was they're changing the late fee from 2%, which currently is to 1%. Why would you change that? It doesn't make much sense. They do have one sublessor over there, that we found Independent Helicopters. They have a lease I've only been able to find two pieces of paper. One was a six month lease in 2013 when they originated there. From July to January. The second one was for 2019. That one states they paid \$200 a month. \$200 a month. Is that my time? For \$200 a month you get the office, cleaning, telephones, cables, internet and phones. Heat and electric to \$200 a month for an office.

Theodore Kusnierz

Ma'am, your time has expired.

Cheryl Licata

Okay, thank you so much.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you. The next individual signed up to speak is Michelle Goyette if I'm saying that correctly.

Michelle Goyette

Michelle Goyette 81 Skylark Drive Ballston Spa. And I just want to make out three points. I moved to Milton, I knew there was an airport within one mile. And I had no problems with that. And I realized that airports have activity. But what has happened is, it's continuing and continuing to have more activity. Now, just like I'm subjective, that I can't decide to put up a 10 story building in my neighborhood, the why, you know, I have to do certain activities. Why isn't that the same for an airport? It is in the middle of a residential area. Alright, so it's two ways. We are a community. So yes, welcome the airport, I'm not against the airport, I don't want it to shut down, I do want it to thrive. But at the same point, this airport should realize they're in the middle of residential community and should take into account the surrounding area, instead of just saying, How am I going to make money and I'm going to try to expand and make this bigger and bigger within the confines, apparently. My other concern was, I've remember being here about 10 years ago. And they said, any size plane can land here, or I understand if there's emergencies. But if you continue to allow bigger and bigger aircraft come in, sooner or later, something's gonna happen, aha, safety, we got to tear down houses make it bigger. So I'm concerned, of all these activities, that have an underlying thing that really has no concern of being part of our community. Yes, I moved to an airport, I welcomed it. I love it. But not when it doesn't take into account it's also in the middle of a residential area. The other thing which has been brought up is, what is the real benefit? What is Saratoga County getting out of this? And what is Milton? Especially if they're gonna keep raking in money, but we're just getting the pennies. When it's the environment, it's the community around us that we're paying the cost. So please, I ask you to take look and look at limiting what is loud, I'm not saying shut it down. I'm not saying you can't do this stuff. But take into consideration, you go to other airports. Nothing could be done after 11 o'clock. 11pm You know, for noise or something. There's certain things that should be taken into consideration that this is in the middle of a residential area. It should be a two way street. We are a community with this airport. But is the airport a community with us? Thank you.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you very much. The next individual is Karen Serven. Is Karen Serven here? How about Jeff Serven. Then the last individual who has signed up to speak is John Maxim.

John Maxim

John Maxim 14 Friar Tuck Way Saratoga Springs. It'll be short my only concerns are putting a \$6 to \$7 million building, it's privately, going to be privately owned in the middle of some county property for 40 years. What happens in the middle of this, I think that's insane to start with, that the County would let somebody kind of squat on their property for 40 years. What happens if you don't like it? And somewhere along the way, what happens if they decide to pull out? What are you gonna do with this building this the middle of the airport? The main thing is the 40 years. I think that's too long. Thank you.

Theodore Kusnierz

Thank you very much. And at this time, we have no other individuals signed up to speak. And I'll ask the Clerk if we received any written communications.

Therese Connolly

We have not.

Theodore Kusnierz

So thank you to everyone who has taken the time to participate in the public hearing. At this time, the public hearing is closed.