

Support Township Plans

To the Editor:

In the Solberg Airport Bond Referendum held May 16, voters clearly told Readington's Township Committee to protect our quality of life and natural resources by preserving Solberg Airport's open spaces and the small general aviation airport that currently exists. The committee has taken definitive steps in this direction.

The township is acquiring 624 acres of open space and the development rights on 102 acres of airport property. The airport itself will continue to be owned by the Solbergs. The \$21.7 million offered by the township is the higher of two appraisals done on its behalf and according to state standards by experienced, licensed appraisers. This offer is generous compared to recent purchases of raw land and easements in the area, and is ex-

pected to weather any legal challenges.

Prior to the referendum, officials stated that the annual cost, to the average house assessed at \$400,000, of a purchase price of about \$22 million would be \$65 to \$165 annually for the next 20 years, depending on what interest loans and grants are received. This estimate has not changed.

What about costs of NOT preserving the airport? If it were allowed to expand into a jetport, in accord with the approved expansion plans for Solberg Airport, it has been conservatively estimated that expansion would result in \$30 million in infrastructure costs for rebuilding roads and bridges and the like, and \$1.2 million in annual expenses, for a total increased cost to the average house of \$308 per year (braac.org/taxes/index.shtml).

Not included in this cost is the significant depreciation in home values due to noise increases, the incalculable cost of degradation in the quality of our lives, and the increased danger to our school children.

The Township Committee is pursuing the most prudent financial course for all of us, while at the same time protecting our environment, our quality of life and the safety of our children. It deserves our support.

MIKE KELLY

Readington Township