

• LETTERS TO THE EDITOR •

Readington committee's strategy is 'destined to fail'

EDITOR:

In what it claims is a "last resort," the Readington Township Committee finally played the eminent domain card and filed a condemnation action in court against Solberg Airport.

They will tell you they have grown tired and frustrated over their inability to bring closure to this issue and had no choice but to act. They have told us we are in imminent risk of the airport expanding and our quality of life being ruined. These scare tactics ring hollow when one considers that there has been no change in the status of any airport approvals for over five years and that Readington Township has the ability to deny any airport site plan approval for a runway expansion based on environmental or other concerns. Moreover, the Township Committee's view that the environmental assessment they claimed supported a major airport expansion turned out not to be true.

Because the facts do not support their long-standing goal to seize the airport they have spread rumors, intentionally misled the public, and collaborated with BRAAC to scare the hell out of residents. To add insult to injury, they have also spent around \$100,000 of taxpayers' money on a public relations firm to spread this misinformation and fear.

Our Township Committee has told us the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has announced they are looking for another major airport location and since the Solberg property is the same size as LaGuardia Airport it could be located here. Again I find the facts, rather than speculation, more convincing. When I spoke with a senior representative of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, he told me Solberg is clearly outside the search area and is not being considered.

What our town has not done is try to meet directly with the N.J. Department of Transportation commissioner to discuss how he could help. Commissioner Kolluri is an intelligent, reasonable and honorable man who should not be viewed as part of the problem but as part of the solution. Neither has our Township Committee publicly sought out the assistance of our own very influential state Sen. Leonard Lance (R-Hunterdon). Why have they not urged him to sponsor and champion legislation which, if passed into law, would prevent Solberg Airport from ever expanding due to its close proximity to our schools. Could you image if the Township Committee used its political muscle and savvy to influence voters and legislation, rather than spend \$100,000 to convince us of

some "doom and gloom" scenario of jumbo jets landing at Solberg.

Also, our Township Committee has refused to consider non-binding mediation.

Instead, in their arrogance, they have followed a win-lose negotiation strategy, which any professional negotiator will tell you is destined to fail. Why has our Township Committee not pursued a negotiation strategy based on a win-win philosophy?

You see this is not only about the airport. This is also about a land grab and Julie Allen's personal crusade to cement her open space legacy. She no longer cares about acquiring property on the basis of a willing buyer-willing seller and will do whatever it takes to accomplish her imperious vision for Readington. After all, the ends justify the means, and what does it matter if she tramples on some of the fundamental rights our great country was founded on. She and our Township Committee must be right because they (and their PR machine) have told us so time and time again.

Excuse me for not believing them and being concerned about their reckless squandering of taxpayers' money.

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Readington Township