

Westchester County Airport Plan**May 2018 Westchester County Airport Plan****May 2018**

The Westchester County Airport, a major regional transportation center for Westchester County and surrounding area residents, has been the subject of numerous debates about the present operations, future operations and finances of the facility. The Latimer Administration seeks to plan for its future intelligently, with the full input of all stakeholders, as the best way to reduce unnecessary controversy and to move forward effectively. To this end, we have created a framework that will be the basis for our activities over the next few years, which will be both practical and wise.

We have divided our task into four separate components:

- **MASTER PLAN**
 - The development and adoption of a plan that will serve as a roadmap to guide the Airport through the coming years in all facets of its operation.
- **GOVERNANCE**
 - The assessment of different plans for control and management of the facility, including some that would allow Westchester County to tap into the funds that before now have been set aside solely for Airport use and thereby use those funds to offset other County obligations.
- **OPERATIONS**
 - Harmonizing the day-to-day realities of running the Airport for commercial, corporate and general aviation users and the impacts on residents of flight paths, noise, drainage, environmental matters and a range of other such issues.
- **CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT**
 - Ensuring that the residents of the County, including those most directly affected by proximity to the Airport and those that use the Airport in any capacity, have their opinions fully heard in the decision making processes for every aspect of its functioning.

Our initiative begins now, not completes, a process; The Latimer Administration seeks to broaden the dialogue on the Airport from the more narrow discussions of the past, to a full assessment of its impacts and its future.

**Section One
MASTER PLAN**

In 2012, the prior Administration sought and received funding from the FAA to develop a new Master Plan for the Airport, the first such update since 1989. To that end, the County received a

grant of \$1.39 million to conduct the study and complete the Plan. Progress on the Master Plan development did not stay on a proper time track, as the term of the prior Administration ended in 2017. The Latimer Administration inherited an incomplete plan that did not receive formal environmental review or a formal vote of adoption by the County Board of Legislators (BOL). The Latimer Administration has reached out to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for relief from the June 1, 2018 deadline for completion of the plan since it is impossible to re-boot the discussions, conduct an environmental review and obtain legislative approval, by June 1, 2018. The FAA offered a maximum extension to July 15, 2018. Failure to meet the deadline would require the County to reimburse the \$1.39 million granted. But, in the judgement of the Latimer Administration the Plan is not complete, and was based in part, on faulty assumptions.

The Latimer Administration now proposes to submit the Master Plan as it currently exists, with a cover letter indicating that the plan is provided without prejudice (i.e. not indicating support for the document contents) and that a Master Plan Supplement will immediately be commencing. The Supplement will be fully vetted and debated by all shareholders, with an appropriate environmental reviews, to be submitted for approval by the BOL. This will protect the County from having to refund the original grant of \$1.38 million, and still open the Master Plan process to what it should have been last year – a widely inclusive dialogue and hopefully, widely accepted document.

We will commence Community Input Meetings (listed below) to re-start the full review, as it should have been done in the six years up to today. These meetings will solicit input and comment on the areas of the Plan that are deficient, and allow us to re-fashion a more complete plan that will reflect the philosophy of this Administration, the Legislators and the public at large.

Section Two GOVERNANCE

Over the past two years, the prior Administration has submitted for BOL review plans that would change the governance of the Airport, and allow a private sector entity (2016 – Oak Tree Capital; 2017 – Macquarie Development) to exert operational control over the Airport, in exchange for payments stretched out over 40 years to the County. Each of these plans involved a front-loaded dollar amount targeted to close budget gaps. The plans were presented along with the annual budget in mid-November, with a December decision date targeted for budget adoption. The 2016 plan was rejected by the BOL, and the 2017 plan was not acted on by the BOL.

The Latimer Administration views this as the wrong way to make any decision on governance. The BOL is encouraged to begin a robust discussion about the various governance plans, meeting with the principals through the appropriate Committee structure; the Administration will conduct Community Input Meetings to solicit public commentary on these plans, and will assess our team's position on governance. By mid-October, the Administration will meet with the BOL and jointly decide whether any such plan should be included in the 2019 Budget Plan to be submitted in November. Any projected revenues for 2019 will pivot on a consensus as to whether the change in governance is warranted not only for its money implications, but fully understanding what level of loss of control would occur, and what the policy implications would be.

Section Three OPERATIONS

The Latimer Administration will conduct a thorough review of every facet Airport operations, researching the external concerns over flight volume, noise, drainage, environmental impact, flight paths, landing altitudes, type of equipment used, frequency, curfews, operations of Fixed Base Operators (FBO), parking, etc. Community Input Meetings will be held on this topic, where residents can particularly express their concerns about Airport impacts (separate from Master Plan and Governance issues). Many of these issues will be part of the on-going work of the Airport Advisory Board. It is the Latimer Administration's intent, as we empanel the new members of the Airport Advisory Board, to task them, as well as the Avports team, under the supervision of Hugh Greechan, County DPW Commissioner and Joan McDonald, Director of Operations, with cataloging each of these operational issues, and to have the County work with the FAA to deal with each of the problems that fall outside of direct County control and are within the decision-making province of the FAA.

Particular attention will be paid to noise abatement: monitoring equipment, placement, and ground tracking of flights to identify patterns of noise and their correlation to size and type of airplane equipment.

It is the Latimer Administration's intent to task an outside consultant to evaluate the claim made by FBOs that added capacity for overnight plane storage which results in less takeoffs and landings. This assertion must be identified objectively so as to determine if FBO operations reduce, add or are neutral to overall numbers of flights at the airport.

The Latimer Administration will ensure that commercial airline restrictions, passenger per half-hour limits and gate restrictions are honored. We must more fully assess the movements of general aviation users, corporate jets, GA operations, etc. as they contribute to the overall use of the airport. The pricing structure for all services provided at the airport, from jet fuel, to food service, that impact the user of the Airport, as well as the financial bottom line of the facility will also be reviewed.

Section Four CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

We must ensure that our residents are full partners in the discussions about the Airport, leading to decisions in the aforementioned areas of Master Plan Development, Governance and Operations. Accordingly, we intend to do the following:

- Announce new members for the Airport Advisory Board, including community representatives from local jurisdictions (Friday, June 1)
- Hold Community Input Meetings on the following topics:
 - Master Plan- June 6
 - 7:00pm
 - Rye Brook Village Hall
938 King Street
Rye Brook, NY 10573
 - Governance - June 11
 - 7:00pm
 - Hergenhan Recreation Center
40 Maple Avenue

Armonk, NY 10504

- Operations - June 25
 - 7:00pm
 - West Harrison Senior Center
251 Underhill Ave.
West Harrison NY 10604

Each meeting will start at 7 p.m., and will conclude with the final speaker. Residents are welcomed to speak up to five (5) minutes on the assigned topic of that meeting, and may also provide written testimony of any length as desired. Additional meetings on each of the three topics will be scheduled throughout the summer and fall months as may be needed to ensure full discussion of each opinion. The Board of Legislators may choose to establish their own schedule of public committee meetings and hearings to solicit public input on these issues as well.

SUMMARY

The choices before the County warrant full discussion and careful consideration of all options. As a County we must honestly weigh the financial and management impacts of these decisions as they will affect the future of our home for 30-40 years into the future.

Together, we hope to make the best possible decisions.

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