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Re: Airstrips and Heliports

Randy Delong • South St, South Hero

Discussion

Being an aviator and in the aviation field for 50 years, I want to caution the town's Select Board in rushing into a decision on a very important decision. I appreciated Robert Fireovid's input and I believe his arguments are well founded. In an effort to be brief, I must generalize but also want to add a few more considerations to his list: homes located in close proximity of even a small airport degrade in value (noise and the possibility of an accident) and, single engine piston (propeller) airplanes are not the only types of airplanes that can operate at private airports. Other types include single and multi-engine turboprops (PC-12, King Airls) and jet airplanes (PC-24), both of which are noisy. Because they are certified to operate from small, privately owned airports (like in South Hero) which only have "unimproved" runways (sod/grass and gravel), will the town be required to attain additional liability insurance and at what cost in order to protect its citizens? Following an airplane accident, especially when housing is destroyed or there is a fatality, homeowners and/or family members have the right to litigate against the airplanes owner, the airplane manufacturer, the airport, the town in which the airport is located and any other party to the action. The plaintiffs do have to prove culpability, which can be both expensive and time consuming and the defendants need to defend themselves which is also very expensive. Guess who wins here?

Airplanes and pilots have varying degrees of certification and proficiency levels. There are airplanes made from kits (experimental) and 'Sport' pilots that require only a minimum level of experience. This combination poses the highest risk to a neighborhood (private) airport. An airplane crash is unlikely, but they do occur. Is the South Hero Fire Department prepared with hazmat and high heat and intensity fire fighting equipment from av-fuel including Jet-A? Are their personnel trained to fight such a fire?

You do not have to have a private pilot's license to operate an airplane anymore. Airplane hull and liability insurance is expensive and frequently does not cover the cost of the loss. Many times an insurance company will pay the limits of the policy and walk away. This places the financial burden onto others, which can be sizable. Litigation ensues at great cost and delay. For example, if one or multiple houses burns to the ground from an airplane accident; the airplane owner's insurance pays out the claim to him/her but there may be no funds remaining to rebuild the house(s). Do you as a homeowner have adequate insurance or the financial resources to rebuild? Hiring an aviation attorney to pursue your claim is very expensive and takes a long

time. Who are the deep pockets? Usually they are the airplane's owner, manufacturer, the insurers and the town. Litigation flies in all directions!

Before moving forward, are we as a town prepared for all this? If the answer is yes, then ask who and how many does it serve?

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Issue No. 4233 • May 21 2023

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Re: Airports and Helipads

Tony Kay • Tourville Dr, South Hero

Discussion

There are clearly many differing opinions on this issue. This discussion can and should continue so we can all benefit from learning the various ways to think about the issue.

Can we agree that the majority of residents should decide this issue? I would be fine with whatever the majority decides. But we won't really know what the majority thinks if this is decided as part of the town plan. We will be voting on the town plan in August. I'd suggest a "ballot" that looks something like this:

ISSUE 1: Do you support the town plan (not including any reference to the airport/helipad issue) YES or NO?

ISSUE 2: Which of the following insertions to the town plan do you support?

1. Airstrips and helipads are not compatible with the quiet rural nature of South Hero. New airstrips and helipads shall not be built in South Hero unless they are designated for emergency use only. (This is language that the Planning Commission originally proposed.)

or

2. New airstrips and helipads, although not compatible with most areas of South Hero, shall be considered on a case-by-case basis. Emergency services shall have access to all areas of South Hero. (This is alternate language that the Planning Commission proposed.)

The Planning Commission has put a lot of time and effort into the Town Plan. It is now in a form that they hope that it will pass. By creating the "insertion" approach, we will have a town plan that the majority of residents support on most important issues. If we don't do the "insertion" approach (and the Planning Commission chooses one version or the

other), a large group of residents will not truly have their vote on the airport/helipad issue counted unless they vote against the whole town plan.

On such an important issue, the Planning Commission should not be making a decision based on the small percentage of people who attend the meetings. A direct vote on the issue will establish the true majority opinion. Note that this approach was discussed at the PC meeting. I am posting it here so that everyone can consider it.

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Re: Airstrips and Heliports

Dan Cox • West Shore Rd, South Hero

Discussion

I agree that private airstrips should be discussed but not feared. I lived for 9 years at the end of the runway or the beginning depending on which way the wind was blowing , at the Shelburne Airport. This is a dirt/grass strip. There were no runway lights and for the most part the airport was used primarily in good weather and on week-ends.

It became a jump site for parachutists for awhile which was great entertainment. New ideas which may impact a village should be viewed for overall impact with both sides not just negative or fear based getting the most attention . Personally I like the idea of a small airport especially as electric planes or are on the horizon.

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Reflective Address Signs

Karen Browning • Lakeview Rd, South Hero

Announcement

911 Reflective Address Markers

Everyone knows the adage "Every Second Counts" when referring to an emergency and it's true. The difference between life and death may only be a few seconds for a victim. To cut down on emergency response time, the South Hero Fire Department Auxiliary is