

# Airport Noise Targeted

*Some helos may be banned, planes may face curfew*

BY JOANNE PILGRIM

In a report to the East Hampton Town Board this week, an airport planning subcommittee recommends banning the noisiest helicopters from the airport and limiting other aircraft classified as among the noisiest to one trip per week all year round.

The report, presented to the town board on Tuesday by David Gruber, the subcommittee chairman, also suggests that those “noisiest” aircraft allowed to make one trip per week be subjected to a 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. curfew and a “noise pollution surcharge” on summer weekends and holidays.

Aircraft classified as “noisy” — but not the noisiest — should be subject to a 7 p.m. to 8 a.m. curfew, the committee says. Helicopters in the noisy category should be banned from the airport on weekends and holidays and limited, overall, to one trip per week. Practice touch-and-go landings and takeoffs should be prohibited on summer weekends.

The proposed rules, according to the report, will achieve immediate relief from noise while allowing the airport to accommodate sufficient traffic so that it can be financially self-sustaining, and remain open.

The subcommittee has been working for a year, Mr. Gruber said, to analyze the airport’s history, finances, capital repair and safety needs, and data on noise and noise complaints, as well as perti-

nent aviation law and other elements.

The recommendations are based on the results of an ongoing airport noise study by consultants hired by the town board. Results of a third phase of that study are to be presented to the board on Feb. 3.

Mr. Gruber said the recommendations were designed to address three problems: aircraft operations in the evening, night, and early morning; high-frequency operations, particularly on summer weekends and holidays, by the noisiest aircraft, which are largely commercial; and helicopter flights, which cause the most disturbance.

They were also intended to “provide an incentive for airport users with noisiest types of aircraft to transition to quieter types in order to avoid restrictions,” the report says. They have little effect on recreational aviation, described in the report as “the intended and traditional use of the airport,” because most recreational aircraft are among the least noisy. No restrictions have been proposed on planes labeled quiet or those that provide emergency services or are in distress.

As of Jan. 1, the town is free of several agreements with the Federal Aviation Administration regarding the airport’s operation, which were attached to the acceptance of previous federal grants.

Town officials have held off accepting new grants in anticipation of determin-

Continued on A7

## Airport Noise

Continued from A1

ing what restrictions should be imposed to reduce aircraft noise, which has engendered ongoing complaints from across the East End. The noise study and reports from both the subcommittee that made the report this week and another on aviation concerns are part of an information-gathering process to lay the groundwork for new rules, which would be put in place before the 2015 summer season.

The committee report notes that initial noise study results concluded that “at some point in its flight, every aircraft . . . exceeds the permitted noise level” as defined by the town noise ordinance, and that the second phase of that study had found that airport noise complaints were “overwhelmingly attributable” to helicopters and jets.

Two-thirds of the landings at the airport last year were by commercial operators, the committee says, and of the remaining 33 percent, only a third were by private pilots based at East Hampton Airport — “the local aviation community that the airport has traditionally served and is intended to serve.”

The proposed restrictions are within the town’s legal rights as the airport proprietor, the committee asserts, and will not run afoul of the F.A.A., which retains a degree of authority over all general aviation airports, regardless of whether they are financially independent.

The report cites several court cases that show airport owners may enact restrictions based on community standards and goals, such as supporting recreational versus commercial aviation (as is suggested for East Hampton), and

may limit airport use by the noisiest craft.

Airport data show an estimated two-thirds of landings here in a recent 12-month period were by commercial aircraft, and that, of almost 7,000 aircraft operations that would fall into the proposed “noisiest” category, 90 percent were by commercial operators.

The noise subcommittee proposes prioritizing aviation uses at East Hampton Airport, with recreational flying receiving the highest priority and access by travelers from afar next. Commuter flights, “in light of the multiple alternative means of access to the East End from New York City and environs,” should have the lowest priority, according to the report.

In a press release issued Tuesday, the Quiet Skies Coalition, which has several members on the committee that wrote the report, endorsed its recommendations. “All over the East End, our neighbors and colleagues have been suffering the impacts of unwanted, unregulated aircraft noise, particularly that of helicopters,” Kathleen Cunningham, the coalition chairwoman, said. “These proposed access limits will finally bring substantial relief to affected communities. This is a first pass, and we will take stock at the end of 2015 to see how it worked, but it’s an excellent start.”