

# STATEMENT FROM THE TOWNSHIP OF READINGTON REGARDING SOLBERG-HUNTERDON AIRPORT MASTER PLAN

DECEMBER 20, 2023

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The Readington Township Committee is aware, via a public information meeting on December 6<sup>th</sup>, that Solberg-Hunterdon Airport (“Airport”) has begun a process to update its Airport Master Plan. Depending on what is included in the Plan, this could significantly affect the future development of the Airport and its surrounding property. The Airport is required to adhere to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidelines as detailed in their Advisory Circular (AC 150/5070-6B) for the development of its Airport Master Plan, which includes sharing information with the public and seeking public comments. No information regarding the future “vision” or planned improvements was presented at the meeting.



The lands owned by the Solberg family, including the Airport, exceed 700 acres, although the Airport facilities themselves occupy approximately 110 acres. This represents the largest undeveloped tract of land in the Township and Township officials are very aware that the development of these lands could have a major impact on the future of Readington and the surrounding communities. For this reason, the Township is working to ensure that it is informed and involved at every step of the Airport Master Plan process.

On December 6, 2023, the Airport held a public information session at Readington Middle School. This was a general introduction to the master plan process but no details regarding the analyses, assumptions, or other information necessary to develop the Airport Master Plan were provided. No information regarding the future “vision” or planned improvements was presented.

FAA regulations also require the preparation of an Airport Master Plan to identify and solicit input from, “stakeholders” regarding potential expansion or material changes to the Airport. The Airport has appointed a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC); however, the Airport did not seek recommendations from the Township about the composition of the CAC. While the Township of Readington is a stakeholder and has authority over the zoning of the airport, no Township official has been appointed to the CAC. Additionally, there are numerous residential neighborhoods near the Airport and a public school in the direct flight path of the crosswind runway. The Township urges the Airport to include representatives from all affected stakeholder groups on the CAC.

The Airport has not worked openly and collaboratively with the Township to date, which is raising concerns. The Airport must articulate a clear process and timeline for public and stakeholder input, which it has not yet done. The Township is committed to conducting as many of its own public meetings as are necessary once it has received the required information from the Airport. At all times, the Township welcomes input and hopes Airport representatives will attend our public meetings to provide an explanation of their plans.

It should be noted the Township is not anti-Airport. To the contrary, its policies regarding the Airport are clearly articulated in the Readington Township Master Plan. This identifies the Airport, in its current configuration, as an important asset that provides economic benefit to the Township and serves as a resource for smaller local and itinerant aircraft. The Township recently demonstrated this support when the Planning Board approved the paving of an unpaved area of the main runway, along with improvements for the safety of Airport operations. While Readington’s Master Plan makes it clear that Airport expansion is not a Township goal, the Township Committee would welcome discussions about an Airport Master Plan that is consistent with the Township Master Plan.

The Township is committed to participating in the Airport Master Plan process in a fair and open manner but seeks a bilateral conversation in which the Airport shares all relevant information with all stakeholders. If this process is undertaken effectively, the agencies overseeing the Airport can make informed decisions about the future of the Airport while considering local needs.

The Township is committed to keeping residents informed utilizing the Township’s website, Facebook page, and email list as appropriate.