

TOWNSHIP OF READINGTON

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Office of the Mayor

February 14, 2006

Dear Readington Resident,

I am writing to update you on the ongoing matter of Solberg Airport. As you know, Readington Township and Solberg Aviation have both expressed a desire to continue negotiations. The Township's long standing goal has been the preservation of the airport in its current configuration, and preservation of the open space surrounding the airport.

In order to move us toward more productive negotiations, the Township requires accurate and up-to-date information, as well as the necessary funds to support a range of options. On Monday, February 6, the Committee took two actions to advance these objectives. The first was to pass a resolution authorizing appraisals of the property, in order to assess current fair market value. Second, the Committee introduced a \$22 million bond ordinance for the purpose of raising funds for the acquisition of property under any of several options.

As outlined in the Township's recent meetings and communications, the Committee's strong preference is an outright purchase of 650 acres of open-space land on the airport site, with development restrictions over the 76 acres that comprise the actual airport facilities. This approach would secure the Township's stated conservation objectives, simplify the process of reimbursement through State funding sources, and leave ownership and operation of the airport in the hands of the Solberg family.

To show that it is serious about reaching an agreement, the Committee would offer a cash price without contingencies. The property would first be purchased with funds made available through municipal bonding, and then be reimbursed through the State's Open Space Preservation Program and similar available programs.

In the alternative, the Township could buy development restrictions only, covering the entire 726-acre parcel. Neither of these two approaches favored by the Township Committee contemplates municipal acquisition or operation of the airport facility itself.

Whatever solution is reached, it must preserve the Township's voice in what happens to the character of our community. Recent legal precedents in Florida and elsewhere make clear that once an airport reaches a certain scale, local residents, and in some cases even the airport owners, may have little say in what type of aircraft can use the facility.

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A public hearing on this matter is scheduled for **Tuesday, February 21 at 6:30 pm at Holland Brook School**. Because this is a matter of such great importance to our Township, I hope you are able to take time from your busy schedules to attend this hearing. This meeting will provide an opportunity for you to become further informed, and also to share your thoughts, comments and concerns with the Township Committee.

For more information or to register for periodic updates by email, please visit www.readingtontwp.org.

Sincerely,

Gerard J. Shamey
Mayor
mayor@township.readington.nj.us