

**Rhode Island Airport Corporation (RIAC)
General Aviation (GA) Airports Strategic Business Plan
Middletown Public Meeting - Newport State Airport
Gaudet Middle School – November 13, 2019 at 7:00pm**

Invited State of Rhode Island Elected Officials:

Senator Algieri, Senator Archambault, Senator DePalma, Senator Euer, Senator Seveney, Senator Sheehan, Senator Sosnowski,

Representative Abney, Representative Azzinaro, Representative Canario, Representative Carson, Representative Costantino, Representative Cortvriend, Representative Craven, Representative Casimiro, Representative Donovan, Representative Edwards, Representative Filippi, Representative Hawkins, Representative Kennedy, Representative Quattrocchi, Representative Ruggiero, Representative Shekarchi

Invited Middletown, Newport and Portsmouth Elected Officials:

Middletown Town Council
Shawn Brown, Middletown Town Administrator
Jamie Bova, City of Newport Council Chair and Mayor
Joseph Nicholson, City of Newport City Manager
Richard Rainer Jr., Portsmouth Town Administrator

Meeting Attendees:

Sign in sheet attached. Please note not all in attendance signed in.

Rhode Island Airport Corporation (RIAC) Attendees:

Christine Vitt – Senior Vice President, Chief Infrastructure Officer
Brent Semple, Esq. – Corporate Attorney
Daniel Porter – Vice President, Planning
Jeffrey Goulart – Vice President, Finance & Business Development
Eric Seabury – Assistant Vice President, Engineering
Jeffrey Wiggin – Assistant Vice President, Landside Maintenance
Kerri Fadden - Assistant Vice President, Operations & Maintenance
David Cloutier – Assistant Vice President, Business Development & Commercial Programs
Don Stubbs – Senior Systems Administrator
Carla Ottaviano – Financial Analyst & Administrator

Meeting Notes:

Introduction and welcome by RIAC at 7:00pm. RIAC welcomed and thanked everyone for their time and attendance. RIAC indicated the purpose of the meeting is to kick off discussions with respect to the GA Strategic Business Plan for Newport State Airport and mentioned that the public input to this GA plan is critical. RIAC thanked Senator Louis DiPalma for his help in putting this meeting together and in getting the word out that the meeting was occurring. Senator DiPalma then provided introductory remarks. He mentioned that the last meeting he attended with the airport was held on October 27, 2016 at the Town Hall. Senator DiPalma recognized

colleagues including Councilwoman Theresa Santos (Middletown), Senator James Seveney (Portsmouth/Tiverton), Representative Deb Ruggiero, and Representative Lauren Carson (Newport) and thanked them for attending. Senator DiPalma indicated this is a 25-30 minute presentation followed by questions and answers. Senator DiPalma further promised we will hold these meetings on a regular basis at least annually, if not more. He also added that this is the first public meeting held for this effort. Senator DiPalma then turned the program back over to RIAC to begin the formal presentation which lasted approximately 35 minutes.

During the formal presentation:

1. At Slide 12 (Airspace Analysis Aerial Study), Councilwoman Santos asked for the lights to be turned off to better see graphics on the screen.
2. At Slide 15 (Legal proceedings), Mr. Zarum stated RIAC does not have the authority to take trees.

Once the presentation was completed, the question and answer period was opened up to members of the public and those in attendance.

Question & Answer

- (Speaker 1) What's been restricting revenue because there is such a loss?
 - RIAC responded it's just simple math, we just don't have the revenue to cover the expenses.
- (Speaker 1) Why not?
 - RIAC responded it's the lack of sound business development opportunities.
- (Speaker 1) There's been no interest in marketing the airport or trying to develop it? I understand there is no money there, but why not?
 - RIAC responded we have posted a notice of availability many times for many parcels for economic development. Unfortunately, the amount of interest we received was limited at best.
- (Speaker 2) Will larger planes be allowed to come into Newport State Airport?
 - RIAC explained that will depend on demand, runway length, infrastructure, it will depend on a lot of things. We have not seen or heard much interest for larger/commercial planes at Newport State Airport. RIAC added that use is restricted by runway length and anything commercial would likely be restricted by insurance.
- (Speaker 3) I live on 4 Oliphant Lane (RW4) and 3-4 years ago the Airport did take trees down on my property and since then the planes are coming in much lower (pilot waves back at me), faster and louder. This is a detrimental aspect to our community. One of my neighbors says the planes rattle glasses in the kitchen.
- (Speaker 4) There are obviously lots of complaints about taking down trees in neighborhoods, noise in neighborhoods, but the airport is there and airports make noise. It's been there a long time and when you buy property next to an airport aren't you aware of the potential problems and the noise?

- (Speaker 5) Those planes are not the same as they were 35 years ago, they are coming in much louder and much faster.
- (Speaker 6) We are losing a half million dollars from the state a year, it's kind of stupid, you're having the other airports be profitable and they have to subsidize us. It's a loser.
- (Speaker 7) So you say the obstruction lights are now obstructions. Are they going to be removed? I have also been in contact with Ann Urban at RIAC regarding the noise and I was wondering if there has ever been a noise study done at UUU, and I was told there has never been. So if everyone is complaining about the noise what would be the possibility of getting a study done?
 - RIAC responded there is nothing off the table. This is a conversation to get all thoughts out for further discussion so we can look forward.
- (Speaker 8) What is the status on the tree removal, you talked about Westerly but what is status in Newport? Is it in litigation, has it been suspended?
 - RIAC responded there is no litigation at Newport State Airport. We have removed everything that we can. There are some owners that have not accepted the Fair Market value offers and there is brand new data we just received so we will be reaching out to owners as required in the near future. We just flew the airport so new and up and coming obstructions have been identified. We are just getting started on this effort but at the moment we have gone as far as we can go.
- (Speaker 9) Is there a timeframe?
 - RIAC responded now that we know, it's going to be relatively quick. We have to act, that is our requirement under federal law.
- (Speaker 10) Is there condemnation currently ongoing?
 - RIAC responded currently no.
- (Speaker 11) I have been to several meetings and it seems the Town has little to no control over the Airport, is that because we accept Federal funds?
 - RIAC responded that we are here for the Town and State, we are not here for RIAC. We want to know what the Community, the Town and State want this airport to be.
- (Speaker 12) I've been to these meetings and walked away feeling I have no voice at all. Went to Town Council and they indicate there is nothing I can do for you. Is there anyway the Town can get more control of the Airport. I have ideas and suggestions but they mean nothing.
 - RIAC responded nothing is off the table here. For example, if the Town wants to run the airport, it should be discussed. It may be a very difficult process and potentially very expensive based on the history and how things have transpired, but it can be a discussion.
- (Speaker 13) Could you repeat Economic Impact information and talk about what the number was and what it means?

- RIAC responded FAA does a study every couple of years and the latest one indicated that the General Aviation airports in Rhode Island contribute \$50M, based on 2015 data, in economic impact for the State. This represents direct and indirect benefits, including a ripple effect, such as the number of jobs the airport creates both inside and outside the fence as well as tourism and economic impact for businesses.
- (Speaker 14) I would like to know what happened to the site I used to use to file complaints against low flying planes, the website is gone. I cannot call the airport, I cannot find the website, it is shut down.
 - RIAC responded if you go to the pvdairport website, it is there. RIAC asked to note on sign in sheet, if you want the noise complaint website link forwarded to you.
- (Senator DiPalma) This presentation will be made available to the public and we will talk about how to make reporting more accessible. We will look at adding the presentation and the noise complaint site to MiddletownRI.com as well.
- (Speaker 15) We are all going to complain about the noise and low flying aircraft but once they cut the trees down the planes come over my backyard about 200 feet above me and every once in a while sludge oil and fuel gets dropped on us. We have been here 33 years and airport was there before us and I grew up in the northwest part of Middletown, so I am used to it. My concerns are airport hours. Published hours are start 7 am Saturday and Sunday and we have planes taking off over our house at 200-250 feet every Saturday morning at 6 – 6:15 am. We call and no one answers and there aren't results, no one reinforces rules and there is no accountability. Who's accountable for making sure hours of airport are adhered to and enforced? Who is managing them? No one is there to take care of that.

Most importantly is safety. In the last 3-4 years we have continuous jumpers (parachute people). He has a business and I understand that we have tourists. There are training classes going on and pilots going up/down and they go in 3-4 plane tandems and increase take off/landings on Saturday mornings between 8-10 am. Traffic on Saturday and Sunday is tenfold. My concerns is safety. I have discussed with pilots and they report they were not aware of jumpers. What is being advertised, and who is involved in overseeing the safety of all that. In Middletown, we just put in a big complex including 17-18 dual and triple family dwellings at the end of the runway and hopefully we don't end up with an accident. Safety is my number 1 concern. And then there is the noise, and the condition of some of the planes. Noise is like 15 Harley Davidson motorcycles driving over your house in a convoy. Someone has to be accountable and safety better be adhered to or we are going to have a big accident (*Community clapped*).

- (Speaker 16) I also live north and I agree with statements about noise pollution and safety. In particular there is one thing we probably all know if we live around the airport.

The latest DC12, and I did research and found this was owned by Cobalt Air – you can go on to website called FlightAware and you can track everything that goes in and out of the airport. They fly the same plane in and out all the time and it is fractionally owned by a company from Portsmouth, NH. This plane comes in/out airport flying very low. I contacted them and no response. The way in which your plane lands creates both a hazard and the slow minimal angle of descent creates true mental anguish in our daily lives and it is a safety issue. Neighbor discomfort can be minimized when a higher angle approach is taken - noise disturbance is decreased by 40-50%. On a September 28th I observed on plane landing at higher angle which avoided the low flying safety issue. If you don't take these noise into account, there will be people lined up, including myself to start to gather neighborhood input and signatures because we have safety issues, noise issues and quality of life issues. I'm not against planes, but things have changed with this one airplane that visits with low flaps, engine throttle on and it's a real hazard.

- (Speaker 17) You talked about transparency and talked about Westerly airport and what is going on there and talked about how you can't expand the runways, is that why you want to expand runways here in Newport?
 - RIAC responded no one is saying we want to expand runways. We simply are letting you know, in the interest of transparency, that there was a recent inquiry. We need to define what this airport needs to be in the future. It could be anything from, does this airport go away which was insinuated earlier, or does the airport or runway expand. There is a whole gamut there.
- (Speaker 18) There is a bit of a disconnect, on one side you are saying your consultant is coming in and looking at development opportunities and on the other side the airport can be reduced to nothing (i.e. no airport). Is that really genuine?
 - RIAC responded that we are looking at all of it, we want to be transparent. There are people that want to know what the economic activities are and what they could be and there are some that want to understand why aircraft fly over their home versus using different approaches.
- (Speaker 19) Who is going to make the call on recommendations?
 - RIAC responded this is a joint decision, this is not RIAC's decision. It is a community, Town, and State decision. We all need to come up with a plan to define what the future of this airport is so that we can all work towards that.
- (Speaker 20) Should there be representation from the community/Town to participate on the task force?
 - RIAC responded that we are talking about next steps. We are going to compile all feedback and continue our analysis. It may be that there is an extension of the task force to ensure the plan is balanced and rolled out properly.
- (Speaker 21) Michael Zarum introduced himself and indicated a lot of these issues are statewide. The people at the airport corporation do an excellent job but their mission is

to run the state airport system (which they also do a very good job at). Airports can be divisive in communities. He was asked as an airport expert to participate in Statewide planning a few years back to review the State Airport Plan. Airports are being criticized for the way they have changed the landscape from a livability standpoint. Warwick's new comprehensive plan says villages are livable within the city and noise impacts cannot be predicted until they happen. When they happen you cannot change it. The US Airports have large Economic Impacts to communities and the whole nation. But that should be everything, people's lives are affected daily. Someone has trees in their yard that they lived with for 30 years, they don't want that cut down. People will really need to compromise and understand both sides of issues, whether you are a proponent, whether you like to fly or whether you would like a quiet home on the weekend. In a place like this, that has a lot of tourists coming in, the air traffic will go up on weekends just when everyone wants peace and quiet.

Mr. Zarum polled the meeting attendees and asked for a show of hands from people being concerned with neighborhood and impact to community versus people that have an aviation interest or may want to build a hangar. The results showed equal interest in both.

All together there will be tough issues, meetings going forward will be very important and I am interested in retiring soon and considering moving to Middletown. I don't want a lot of airport noise and when I go to the beach I can see there are also planes flying over to T.F. Green. There are also traffic patterns going to Logan at different altitudes. I would also hope people here from the Town will discuss these issues at local meetings as a local matter and to address concerns of neighborhood community as well as concerns of people that use the airport because airports are extremely important both for commercial business and recreational use. Hopefully people can compromise, no one is going to get everything they want. It's a tough issue.

- (Speaker 22) I'd like to talk about the safety issue again. I've been here for 63 years at the end of RW 4-22, and I know exactly what is going on. The planes are coming in low and they are shortcutting the approach and pilots have admitted it. Eleven people have perished at this airport since I've been living here. I don't know how many more will. That is something to think about, safety. These pilots do what they like, just like helicopter pilots. I have photos of it. Helicopters take off and go over the school and trailer park and they are not supposed to.
 - (Marc Tripari) Myself and staff have performed over 100,000 skydives over 21 years. We work with the helicopter company and there is no danger of a helicopter running into skydivers. We have lots of communication and experience here. In addition, I'd like to respond to the gentleman who addressed hours and time. The airport operates 24 hours a day which means any pilot can land at any time. The hours for an airport attendant varies from season to season. The airport attendant is there to cut grass, park airplanes, make sure the fuel farm is running and make sure other maintenance is done. The attendant is

not there to control airplanes coming in/out. The hours of the attendant does not mean that if the attendant is not there an airplane cannot land there.

(Community) I don't agree that you should be running these businesses at 6 am on a Saturday/Sunday.

(Marc Tripari) Once again, airplanes fly 24/7. We do not take off at 6:30 am, it is maybe 7:30am.

- (Speaker 23) There is no regulation of who uses airport, how they use airport, or when they use airport. I can't get anyone to make a decision as it is all up to the discretion of who uses. If they want to go out at 6:30 am, they do, and we cannot stop them. When I moved here 35 years ago, the airport was a transportation hub and now the airport is an entertainment center. At least 15 planes go up every day, probably more. The helicopter leaves every 15 minutes and comes back. The noise is unbelievable, it ricochets over houses. The sound is in my kitchen, porch, deck, and I cannot talk to my next door neighbor until plane leaves the area. Skydivers are out at least 9 hours a day during the summer - it's like having a lawnmower over your house all day long. What I want to see is if there is something we can do to regulate that. I cannot even have a cookout because there is so much noise. Is there anything we can do to come to an agreement? Maybe give us a day off once in a while. Come into the airport at a certain level, change propellers to change noise. No one regulates, no one cares. If we can regulate a nightclub in town to close at 1 am, we should be able to regulate entertainment at airport. It is not transportation it is entertainment. It's wrong and it's hurting all the people here paying taxes and subsidizing that airport. What is the purpose, why are the businesses getting everything and residents of Middletown and Portsmouth getting nothing? Why can't we regulate entertainment? *(Community clapped)*
- (Speaker 24) When you perform the study, how long will it take to identify airport infrastructure needs by study and once identified how long it will take the state to fund and make those corrections?
 - RIAC responded we will have a good idea of capital needs both on the vertical and pavement infrastructure by first quarter of next year and that will be prioritized per airport in a Capital Plan. That plan then will be discussed with the Federal government with respect to desired funding sources and once we have a vetted financial plan, we can implement. One thing I want to mention, if we are in a position that we need to displace thresholds, the availability of federal funding is questionable.
- (Speaker 25) In 2011 there was a statewide planning airport study where each of the GA airports needs were identified and for example the ramp at UUU was a critical short term project. RIAC Capital improvement budget \$2.4M in 2016/2017, and to my knowledge the project is not started. In 2018 that project disappeared from the budget. The airport users want to know what happened to those funds and request they be reinstated and project started.

- RIAC responded the capital plan will identify the when and how much. We have a 70% design completed for the apron improvement and was put on hold because of some of the issues we are talking about today. The federal funding became in question because of obstructions.
- (Senator DiPalma) acknowledged the time and recognized Councilwoman Flynn and Councilman Turano from the Town of Middletown. He also added that the gentleman in front had a question with regards to who has a say. The town has a say, you have as say, and I'll speak for folks in general assembly, we have a say as well. Your voice is heard, we listen, and we act. From a funding perspective, we fund the airport. Senator Seveney handles transportation on the Senate Finance Committee. RIAC comes before the Senate Finance Committee to review their budget and that will occur within 4-5 months. Your voice is heard at local level and state level. Thanks for coming. We will follow back with the Town regarding getting the comment website and post the presentation there as well. We'll follow-up with RIAC to follow-up within 6 month or sooner, when they have results.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:20 p.m. RIAC staff were approached by multiple attendees and continued to field questions and comments until approximately 9:00 p.m.