

LUCAS Sarah

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To: LUCAS Sarah
Subject: Comments for the Aurora Airport Master Plan PAC

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To: Aurora State Airport Master Plan Advisory Committee, Oregon Department of Aviation

The planning of the Airport needs to be tightly meshed with the “quality of life” concerns of the surrounding area. This quality of life can be measured by looking very closely at the concerns of people living adjacent to or near the airport. The continual attempts of aviation business interests to override or minimize those concerns should be closely examined. Who will benefit from the airport expansion? Aurora Airport is a state owned facility, owned by all of us. A poorly conceived Master Plan, or one that does not take into consideration the views of people who live nearby will have wide ranging and long term negative consequences for the area. It will deed millions of dollars worth of public value to local aviation “oligarchs”.

I use that word "oligarch" perhaps too loosely, but in light of recent international events perhaps it is appropriate. Allowing wealthy individuals to corruptly leverage uncontrolled economic access to publicly owned facilities for their own benefit is one definition of an oligarch, and it is how Putin's cronies got so rich. Many in the area feel that this is what is happening or might happen.

The word “Quality” was Governor Tom McCall's watchword, along with “Progress”. So perhaps instead of “growth” you need to think of “Quality creates Progress”, as the theme for creating the new master plan for the Aurora State Airport.

Regardless of the size and number of hangars built in anticipation of expansion, control of the facility remains in State hands and should be administered with the interests of the citizens of the state put first and foremost. The desires of the private aviation industry to expand the runway and taxiways should be examined with open eyes. Please look at the negative impacts that the airport is creating now, and realistically extrapolate what those impacts would be when running bigger and bigger planes in and out at a very increased rate of landing and takeoff. Regardless of what the airport business community says are their near-term operational intentions, once the facility is built, past promises will become meaningless.

The Master Plan Advisory Committee will undoubtedly receive many comments regarding the threats the airport poses to our environmental quality from the loss of farmland, from more leaded airplane

fuel and exhaust being sprayed on us, along with the possibility of spills and pollution of our groundwater. I am sure many will talk about the sometimes incessant noise over adjacent neighborhoods and communities, and the very real threat to home values in the region. I concur with all of them, and so do many of my neighbors along “the Canyon Creek corridor” in Wilsonville north of the Willamette River.

However, in addition to those very real threats, most of which are affecting us today, I think the Advisory Committee needs to also keep a wider focus on both our past (how we got here) and our future (where we are going). Re-engage with the original reasons why this committee exists in the first place.

Our past is the legacy that Tom McCall left us. Over the last fifty years Oregon has taken a different path from that of most of the western states. McCall wanted the state to remain as pristine as possible, and he created a system, via land use laws that you in the Master Plan Advisory Committee will help to shape and administer. You must ensure we carry that vision into the future. That is your overriding mission, and I hope you remember it. This was not a partisan issue, at least not in the past. McCall, as you know, was a Republican, and his vision of economic development was that this effort to keep Oregon clean would attract like minded people from all over the world to come to the state, who would bring money and skills to grow the economy in a manner that would blend with the natural ecology of our wonderful state. And, in spite of a few hiccups here and there, he was right, that is what has happened.

In addition to cleaning up the Willamette River, McCall saw the corridor between Portland and Salem as the prime region to show how Oregon can keep from becoming overdeveloped, or worse, poorly developed. For the most part, up to now, this section of the state has remained mostly farmland. It has not been paved with asphalt as has happened with so many communities. Have you ever landed in Houston’s “George Bush Airport ” and then driven the 10-12 miles to the city center? It is mile after mile of semi-abandoned strip malls, with huge pot-holed paved parking lots, abandoned cars, and toxic waste sites in the making. The paving amplifies the summer heat, does nothing to clean the carbon dioxide from the air and is generally ugly and unlivable, almost post-apocalyptic. McCall saw that possible future and dedicated his political life to making sure it did not happen to Oregon.

That is why so many people came to Oregon over the last fifty years. That is why those people invested their lives here. We have done well with this plan. But once you lose your quality, whether old growth timber, or farmland, or groundwater, you never get it back. Every acre of land you save now is an acre we leave to our children. It is not wasted by staying the way we found it. Every limit you put on unchecked expansion will pay off with dividends for our children.

When McCall pushed through the famous Senate Bill 100 in 1973, it was a prescient clarion call, not just to the nation but to the world that we can keep our QUALITY, that we will not let the profit motive be the only rule that guides PROGRESS. And we think Progress means protecting the land. That we create spaces where people can live with the amenities of civilization, but without the worst of its debilitating effects.

I urge you as neighbors and fellow Oregonians to take seriously the concerns of those of us who live near the Aurora Airport. Don’t create the conditions that will add to the sprawl that will blight our children’s future.

Thanks you

Lee

