

-----Original Message-----

From: Hillsgroveumc@aol.com [mailto:Hillsgroveumc@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 29, 2002 4:52 PM
To: Suzanne Orenstein
Subject: Re: PDF (City of Warwick Comments)-Master Plan

Susanne:

Here also are some comments on one of the draft reports of L & B. for the use of the SRC.

COMMENTS ON LANDRUM & BROWN'S PRELIMINARY DRAFT
CHAPTER 4, AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, T.F. GREEN AIRPORT (PVD)
January 24, 2002 by Duane Clinker

I find this environmental statement to be inadequate and deeply troubling. Overall, it reads like an often out-of-date "boiler plate" document which in some cases seems designed to simply meet minimum requirements for documentation (as opposed to exploring real or potentially real issues in an adult way), and in other cases seems almost intentionally confusing.

Look especially at the noise section (4.1-2). Here noise is presented primarily as a nuisance issue. The strongest statement made is that "noise may have detrimental impacts on the human environment." But, noise is more than a nuisance. The SRC's 20 Year Planning Group's Subcommittee on Quality of Life found:

The stakes in the battle to understand the impact of noise on the human person can be quite high. A 1993 study of persons over 75 living near L.A. International Airport, found rates of cardiovascular disease increased by 18%, and accidental deaths by 60%. Suicides doubled for people between 45 and 54, and approximately 60 more people died each year on average than away from the airport. A study of London's Heathrow Airport found significantly higher admissions to mental hospitals for those near the airport.

The Landrum & Brown document cites instead another study (Table 4.1-1). There are three problems with their approach. First, the table's title implies it is information from "T.F. Green Airport", although the documentation makes that extremely doubtful. Secondly, it is over 25 years old, and can hardly be cited as contemporary science. Thirdly, it implies that the real issue with noise is merely the "percent annoyed." Their out of date and minimalist approach is further demonstrated in the report's section on "Social Impact of Noise" (4.1-3), which mentions not a word about health effects (except the hint that sleep may be disturbed)!

Nowhere does Landrum & Brown give the SRC current information on noise today. At best their report repeats old information based on the old (pre-2001) flight paths (4.1-9). It is therefore hard to understand the purpose of the report at all as a source of useful information.

Even worse than no, or old information, is the reports use of false information. As noted at the end of the SRC meeting of January 24, 2001, the information on noise complaints (4.1-15), seem based on public and SRC members comments, to be grossly undercounted.

The tendency of the Landrum & Brown draft report to avoid real issues and real data is again prominent in the "Social Setting" section (4.3), wherein one hopes to "determine the effect that airport development will have on the social fabric of the airport's surrounding communities." The report promises to tell the public about "relocation of residences, farms and businesses, disruption of established communities, disruption of planned development, and changes in . . . traffic patterns" (4.3-1). While the authors take a pass on providing this information, ("We need to define the Proposed Action before proceeding on this section"), the list itself is informative. What is left out of the list? Health effects for one! Furthermore, a lot can be known right now about dislocation. Again to cite the SRC's Quality of Life report:

We further noted concerns with respect to those most severely affected by noise who are within the current 65dnl line drawn around the airport. A very large number of families are in "limbo," having been promised a buy-out but not yet receiving assistance. This puts families in a no-win situation of not being able to plan to stay, but not being able to really move until the airport acts. We learned that only approximately 15% of homes scheduled for buy-outs have been acted on (bought, under contract, or offers made), leaving 225 families in limbo. We found no plans for sound buffers to replace houses which were razed in this program.

Approximately 2500 families were determined to be eligible for soundproofing. About 800 families are still awaiting the work. At the present rates, it will take at least four more years to complete this work. Even then, the issue will probably continue and shift due to new sound patterns based on new flight paths, engine technology, and possible reduction in satisfactory noise criteria by FAA.

Of course, all of the information (and more) that was available to the committee of volunteers in the Quality of Life subcommittee was available to Landrum & Brown professionals at the time of writing this draft report.

L & B do include a lot of information on job estimates in gross generalizations. Unfortunately, the information on wages does not account for inflation or cost of living (Table 4.4-5), does not tell us how many jobs have been created or are held by workers in the local area, (4.4-3), includes no mention of adverse effects on local tax rates due to the de-valuation of local properties, (Table 4.4-6). In fact, the whole issue of adverse effect on local neighborhood properties (Table 4.4-7) is ignored.

When we come to Section 4.5 on Air Quality, we suddenly enter another arena. Now, the over-simplifications of the previous work is gone and the citizen-reader becomes baffled by chemical symbols and health issues that are left largely unexplained. The tendency to mis-appropriate data, however, is still present.

The report cheerily notes that "Kent County did not exceed any of the Federal or state standards for PM10. . ." (4.5-6). That's important because PM means "particulate matter" which is potentially quite dangerous. But this is not the measure of a gas. If the airport has a problem with air emissions, its impact or lack of impact might be significant on a county-wide basis. But, if it has a negative impact because of small particles falling from the sky, then one would look for measurements under the flight paths, and not at the distant corners of the county! Reading carefully for the particulate matter issue, one notes that where it really counts, as in "Annual Emissions" (Table 4.5-6), PM10 is simply not provided (4.511)!

It is hard not to be cynical about this document. It simply does not provide even an adequate outline of issues, never mind content, which the SRC and public needs to do its job to understand the affected environment around T.F. Green.