



TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

East Hampton Town Board Committed to Change at East Hampton Airport in Order to Address Noise, Traffic, Environmental, Safety Concerns

Board Remains Confident in Plan to Deactivate Airport on Feb. 28, 2022 and Open a New, Private-Use Airport on March 4, 2022

Town asks Federal Aviation Administration to take timely action on procedural challenges outlined in a Feb. 3 letter from the agency and to work cooperatively with town in order to maintain all key facilities and functions at the new airport

In response to a long history of community complaints about negative impacts from the airport, the East Hampton Town Board has mapped out a plan of action following the September, 2021, expiration of “grant assurances” to the FAA, which limited East Hampton’s ability to enact airport use restrictions.

Since November, 2020, in reliance on a letter from the FAA that the Town has spoken about at length, the Town has been publicly complying with the process recommended by the FAA.

On January 20, 2022, the Town Board voted unanimously to deactivate the current airport and to open a new, private airport that will operate under a Prior Permission Required (PPR) framework. The closure and opening of a new airport will provide the town with maximum flexibility regarding airport regulation.

A detailed framework for airport use, based on permissions tied to aircraft type or size, time of day, noise level, type of operator, and environmental considerations is to be developed and implemented before the 2022 summer season.

The Town’s public process included presentation of several studies prepared by airport consultants, numerous community feedback sessions, and regular dialogue between the Town and the FAA. The Town continues to meet with the FAA to this day.

Consistent with the process recommended by the FAA, the Town submitted its deactivation notice for the East Hampton Airport on January 20, 2022, pursuant to a Town resolution. On the same day, the Town submitted a separate activation notice for a new private-use airport. The Aeronautical Study regarding the activation has been validated and is currently under review. The Town continues to work with FAA staff throughout this process and stands ready to provide additional information or answer questions as they arise.

This change of status is required because the Town must address community concerns regarding the negative impacts caused by operations at the East Hampton Airport. The Town will not continue to sponsor a public use airport that is not consistent with the community's needs. Indeed, for decades—and most recently, since 2015—the Town has tried to work with the FAA to establish reasonable limits at the public use East Hampton Airport. The FAA did not provide assistance in that effort; commercial operators did not provide assistance; and thereafter the Town Board undertook a robust process to inform decisions regarding the airport after expiration of the grant assurances. That is where the Town finds itself today.

In discussions with the FAA, the Town has made clear that the new, private-use airport needs to reflect the community in which it sits. Excessive overflight traffic, constant noise, and safety issues are not tolerable in East Hampton. That said, with appropriate controls the Town believes that the new airport, with cooperation from all stakeholders, including the FAA, will be consistent with community values and continue to provide some benefits to the Town. To that end, on January 26, the Town told the FAA that it would prefer to offer instrument procedures, a private tower, and other navigational aids at the new airport; however, if the FAA would not permit these safety-based aspects to be incorporated at the new airport by March 4, the Town would open a VFR-only, uncontrolled airport. If this occurs, the PPR framework will necessarily reflect this reality and only permit the number and types of operations consistent with an airport not having instrument procedures or a control tower. The currently contemplated PPR will likely include the ability for certain commercial operations to occur, but that may not remain true if the FAA will not authorize a tower, procedures, and Class D airspace.

After business hours on February 2, 2022, the FAA sent a letter to the Town regarding obstacles it foresees with its internal processes regarding activation of the new private use airport. That letter is now posted to the Town's website. In the letter, the FAA suggests that the East Hampton Airport may not be operating in a safe manner such that opening of the new airport may be delayed. The Town has relied on FAA oversight of the East Hampton Airport—as it was required to do—for decades. There has never been a suggestion from the FAA that the East Hampton Airport is unsafe; that the surrounding airspace is unsafe; that the instrument procedures are unsafe; or that the Town's privately contracted air traffic control tower is unsafe. Just the opposite is true. As an example, as recently as December 2021 the FAA reviewed the airspace at the East Hampton Airport and upgraded it when the Tower is not in operation from Class G to Class E airspace. At no point during that process did the FAA suggest that the East Hampton Airport or its airspace is unsafe. Similarly, the instrument procedures are routinely updated by the FAA, including as recently as February 2019.

It is noteworthy that the FAA never once in its letter states that the new private use airport will not be available on March 4. The Town remains confident that it will open on that date and looks forward to ushering in the new chapter of aviation in East Hampton that is consistent with the concerns that have been raised by so many in the community. The Town believes that all of the issues raised by the

FAA can be reasonably and promptly addressed by the FAA by March 4. The Town sees no reason that this cannot be achieved and has no plans to change course at this time.

Additional information about the Town's process in addressing East Hampton Airport can be found on the Town website at <https://ehamptonny.gov/745/Airport-Public-Engagement-Process> and in the following recent press releases:

<https://ehamptonny.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11421/EH-Airport-pr-rel-Jan-18-2022-final>

<https://ehamptonny.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11426/Press-Release---East-Hampton-Airport-Jan-2022>