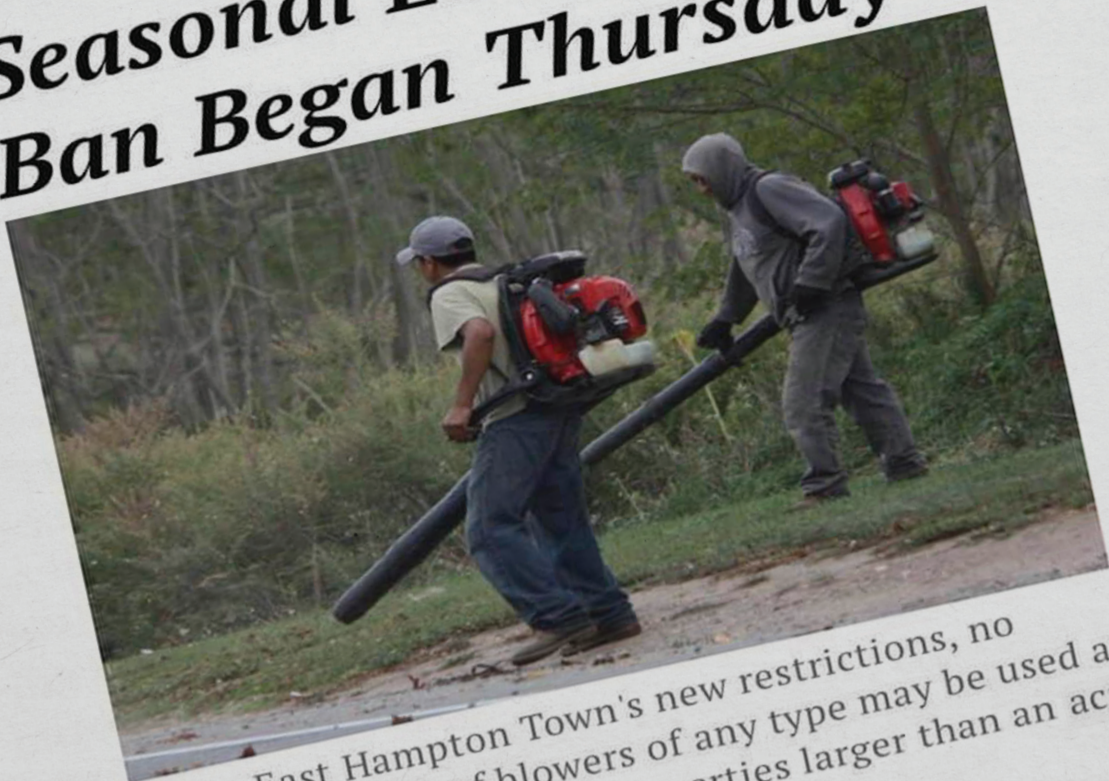


Seasonal Leaf Blower Ban Began Thursday



Under East Hampton Town's new restrictions, no more than two leaf blowers of any type may be used at the same time except on properties larger than an acre.

WAIT, BUT SMALL JETS, MEGA-JETS, HELICOPTERS, SEAPLANES, AND ASSORTED PROPELLER PLANES, THEY'RE OKAY?

When the Town accepted FAA funds twenty years ago, it surrendered the right to control its own destiny and that of the 610 acres it handed over to the airport. The facts are irrefutable. The East Hampton Airport exists only for the benefit of the companies that profit from it and for the pleasure and convenience of a handful of willful people while damaging the lives of many thousands of others. At the end of September, all FAA agreements expired. By refusing further FAA funding, the Town Board finally has the ability to correct a very bad mistake. East Hampton can shutter the airport and regain control of the 610 acres of valuable land devoted to its use, reimagining its enormous potential for projects that would benefit the entire community.

FACT: Air, water, and noise pollution are the airport's main contribution to the Town of East Hampton.

There are a great many myths, half-truths, and outright lies surrounding the airport and its true value to the Town of East Hampton – largely spread by a group calling itself the “East Hampton Community Alliance.” Which in reality is a business alliance founded by two pilots, catering to the interests of companies that profit by transporting a tiny handful of people to the Hamptons on various size jets, seaplanes, propeller planes, and helicopters. We think you deserve to know the facts.

FACT: The Town of East Hampton receives an embarrassingly tiny return on its huge investment.

The hard truth is that it was one of the great business bumbles of all time. According to the unbiased, Independent Impact Analysis commissioned by the Town itself, estimated passenger spending amounts to 1%-3% of the Town's taxable sales revenue. An amount, they say, that's “...less than the price of a medium priced home in East Hampton.” Furthermore, again according to the Town's own study, of the 1.7 million people who visit East Hampton each year, less than 1% used the airport to get here. Enough said? Still worse, The Town of East Hampton receives nothing, zero, zilch from any airport revenue, which can only be used to benefit the airport!

FACT: JFK, Laguardia, and the East Hampton Airport are now the three biggest polluters in New York State.

The East Hampton Airport is an environmental menace. During takeoffs and landings, airplane emissions contain a variety of noxious air pollutants including carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, in one hour of flight a typical private jet emits more carbon into the air that you breathe than a typical car does in one year. The Environmental Analysis commissioned by the Town concluded that that 6% of the Town's harmful emissions are produced by 1% of the population – which just happens to be the 1% that insist that the airport be maintained for their convenience. We can't eliminate cars, but we can certainly eliminate aircraft.

FACT: According to the Town's Economic Impact Analysis, the East Hampton Airport employs an estimated 15 full-time people.

And accounts for no more than 100-230 tourist related seasonal jobs. To be charitable, the “Alliance's” oft used claim that passenger spending generates thousands of jobs and contributes tens of millions of dollars in revenue to the East Hampton coffers, is simply a self serving fantasy.

FACT: The airport is a threat to the water you drink: The Magothy Aquifer is the Town of East Hampton's sole source of drinkable water.

Maintaining its purity is essential. The airport sits directly atop the deepest and most critical part of the Aquifer. You hardly need a scientist to tell you that pumping a million gallons of fuel annually, thousands of landings and takeoffs, and the horrifying practice of testing firefighting foam on airport grounds is not a healthy idea. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has detected four different locations on airport property that show evidence of contamination. It's likely that this contamination is responsible for the poisoning of wells in Wainscott. A further investigation is in process at this moment and remedial action is likely to cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars. Ah, but as you may suspect, someone is profiting from pumping all that fuel: that someone is one single operator, Sound Aircraft Services.

FACT: The airport is a threat to the safety of our neighborhoods.

To begin with – given that most aircraft accidents happen within a few miles of an airport, on approach or departure – a land-locked airport is a very bad idea. Last year, the Town, wisely recognizing the danger of aircraft flying just above the treeline, banned the Special VFR (Visual Flight Rule) provision which allows pilots – not qualified to use instruments – to land, flying dangerously low, using eyesight rather than instruments to guide them safely in. A commercial air transportation company took the Town to court, and a judge, citing generic FAA allowances rather than carefully considering the very particular and unwise geographic issues of the East Hampton Airport, issued a temporary order that supported the provision's reinstatement. And that, sadly, is where things stand – for now. How safe do you think that is!

FACT: The East Hampton Airport plays a non-essential role in Medevac rescue operations.

Let's start with the fact that Medevac helicopters are based at the Islip and Westhampton airports and fly to a spot near the emergency itself. Quoting Jessica Killoran, Flight Paramedic with Stony Brook Medicine: “We meet the injured person pretty much anywhere they are.” When pressed to downsize the planned Emergency Center on Pantigo Road, the attorney for the Stonybrook/ South Hampton Hospital was quoted in The East Hampton Star as saying that they were easily able to eliminate the planned helipad “...because emergency helicopters (Medevac) are allowed to land in any safe open space.” Any firm, flat place like a highway, a ball field, a parking lot, in short, anywhere they're needed, close to the scene of the emergency.

FACT: Disregard the bombast, the threats, and the fear mongering. The plague will not spread to Montauk.

The tiny airport in Montauk, with it's short runways and iffy weather, has, by formal FAA agreement, been designated a Prior-Permission Airport. A unique and very powerful category. Which simply means that before helicopters and jets – the worst offenders of all – can land there they must radio ahead for permission. Which means that the Montauk Airport has the absolute, unqualified power to say no. Simple.

The Town Board has in hand the same shocking facts that you've just read – most of which came from the heavily researched, unbiased, Independent Impact Analysis commissioned by the Town itself. Given all the facts, it's clear that there can only be one sane response: close the airport. It should also be clear that a cowardly compromise is unwise and unacceptable.

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THEFACTHOUNDS

[Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts.]

Daniel Patrick Moynihan