



A big improvement

L-S boys hockey team currently stands at 4-3-2

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Public silent about airport Massport's open meetings on draft report go unattended

By Geoff Moore

Correspondent

For a meeting with a proposed topic of noise, it sure was pretty quiet.

After being vocal over Massport's management of L.G. Hanscom Field, no members of the public, town representatives or other organizations turned out for the third of four technical meetings on the draft 2005 L.G. Hanscom Field Environmental Status and Plan-

ning Report, held Jan. 11.

The previous two meetings went unattended as well, according to Tom Innis, Massport's ESPR project manager.

Since its publication in November 2006, the report, which Innis said took eight months to complete at a cost of \$800,000, has been distributed to more than 300 individuals and organizations and is available to the public online and in public libraries. Innis indi-

cated that to date, Massport had received no public comments, a situation he expected to change as the closing date of Feb. 8 for submission of public comments approached.

In a letter dated April 19, 2005, and reproduced in the draft report, Sara Mattes, chairman of Hanscom Area Towns Selectmen (HATS), states the HATS position with respect the certificate establishing the scope for the 2005 ESPR.

In the letter HATS questions the responsiveness of the 2000 ESPR process to input from HATS' environmental subcommittee, the lack of meaningful and tangible controls resulting from the 2000 ESPR and the fact that "recommendations outlined in the Certificate issued by the Secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) have not been fully addressed by Massport." The letter states,

"As a result both HATS and the ESC will choose to remain essentially aloof from the 2005 ESPR process."

The letter concludes that HATS will work to implement fully the directives set forth by the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) in response to the 2000 ESPR and offers to work with Massport "to develop a better mechanism to use public resources

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to find a balance between the needs of Hanscom Civilian Airport and the historic environment in which it resides.”

Similar concerns on the 2005 ESPR scope of work were expressed in a letter dated May 18, 2005, from Margret Coppe, president of Safeguarding the Historic Hanscom Area's Irreplaceable Resources, known as ShhAir. In her letter, Coppe said, “as volunteers, we have devoted hundreds of hours to serious involvement in the past and have been disappointed with the disregard on the part of Massport to our input.”

Coppe's letter concludes that ShhAir consider the ESPR process flawed and that participation at past levels would be a waste of effort on their part.

Massport compiles the ESPR every five years to compare predictions on air and road traffic growth, noise level and distribution and other environmental impacts with the actual occurrence in the year of the study. Innis said that the draft report is “primarily a planning tool and a retrospective analysis of 2005.” As such, he said that there had been discussion with area town planners and managers on specific elements that the towns wished to see in the report.

The series of meetings, intended to inform the public on the technical content of the two-volume 1266 page report, concludes on Jan. 18, ahead of the MEPA consultation session on Jan 23. The state Secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs will then issue a certificate in response to the report and consultation comments.

Despite representation from only the local press, noise and vibration control consultants Mary Ellen Egen and Bradley Nichols from Harris Miller Miller & Hanson Inc., Senior Architectural Historian Virginia H. Adams of PAL Inc and Massport's Richard Walsh and Tom Innes presented a comprehensive overview of the report's sections on noise and cultural and historical resources.

The report records activity levels and environmental conditions at Hanscom Field for 2005 and compares them to historic data from 2000. It shows that total aircraft operations decreased from 212,371 in 2000 to 169,955 in 2005. Consultants have modeled and recorded the cumulative environmental effects of “Moderate” and “High Growth” scenarios for 2010 and 2020.

Growth scenarios for general aviation use are based on historic trends and industry

forecasts. High Growth commercial operation predictions are based on numbers from the New England Regional Aviation System Plan. Moderate Growth for commercial operations assumes that Hanscom continues to serve niche markets and demand continues to grow for these services.

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President, Safeguarding the Historic Hanscom Area's Irreplaceable Resources (ShhAir)

Predicted aircraft operations under Moderate Growth in 2010 and 2020 are 190,548 and 236,440 respectively. Similarly, the High Growth aircraft operations prediction in 2010 and 2020 are 203,666 and 266,607 respectively.

In terms of noise, the report

provides an explanation of Day-Night Sound Level (DNL), and other noise metrics including, Time Above (TA) decibel threshold of both 65dB(A), (the equivalent of a lawn tiller at 50 feet) and 55dB(A) (the equivalent of quiet urban daytime), Noise Exposure (EXP) and Distribution of Sound Exposure Levels (SEL).

The report seeks to provide a scientific basis to judge the impact of noise, which for many individuals is a subjective measure, based on factors such as intensity, duration and time of day of the occurrence.

In conclusion, the report states that noise levels have dropped since 2000 due to technological trends towards quieter aircraft. However, an increase in general aviation jet activity partially offset this decrease, a trend that is expected to continue in the 2010 and 2020 scenarios, resulting in a projected increase in noise levels.

Noise contours, which provide a mapping of where the noise occurs in and around the airport, show an overall decrease in 2005, with some increase to the north in Bedford. Predictions for 2010 and 2020 show the contours spreading outwards, affecting more people and historic sites at both Moderate and High Growth

rates.

The total population exposed to Day-Night Sound Level greater than 65dB(A) — the level at which, by normal Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) land use compatibility guidelines, individuals are considered to be significantly affected by noise — fell from 26 individuals in 2000 to 17 in 2005. This number of people affected is expected to increase to 63 in 2010 and 193 in 2020 under the High Growth scenario.

No historic sites are within the 65dB(A) DNL contour in 2005. Two historic sites — the Deacon John Wheeler/Capt. Jonas Minot Farmhouse in Concord and the Wheeler-Merriam House in Concord — fall between 60dB(A) and 65dB(A) in the 2020 High Growth scenario.

The final technical presentation on Air Quality and Ground Transportation is scheduled for Jan. 18 at 6 p.m. in the Civil Air Terminal (second floor) at Hanscom Field, 200 Hanscom Drive, Bedford. The MEPA consultation session is scheduled for Jan. 23 at 5 p.m. at the same location. Interested parties may download the 2005 ESPR at Massport's Web site at http://massport.com/hansc/pdf/full_espr05.pdf.