

## Comments prepared for North Castle Planning Commission, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009

Hello, my name is Susan Leifer. I have lived in Westchester for 33 years; I am presently a member of the Westchester Citizens Airport Advisory Committee; and a member of the Watershed Committee for the State Sierra Club. I am concerned with many watershed issues, in particular preserving the integrity of the Kensico Reservoir: These remarks are from my role as a Westchester citizen and an environmentalist.

### **Keeping the Kensico clean**

The area proposed for the parking complex is in the Kensico watershed just 500 feet from its shore. This reservoir holds water for one million people in Westchester and 8 million of NYC, a total of 9 million or one half of the State's population.

Right now our water is under an EPA filtration avoidance mandate. The cost of building a Filtration Plant is estimated to be 20 to 30 billion dollars and millions to maintain; it would need to be rebuilt every 12-15 years. From a taxpayer's point of view, if we had to filter our water, the cost to the County, City and State would be staggering. For Westchester alone it would be in the billions of tax dollars.

Filtration is not a sieve, but a major Chemical Plant, which would involve multiple daily chemically loaded truckloads in, and multiple effluent truckloads out. Chemically treated water can never be returned to the sparkling quality of water filtered naturally by wetlands and forests.

### **Parking**

At present the Airport parking capacity is 1200 spaces; the New King Street offsite proposal is for 1450 spaces, more than doubling the parking capacity. Both the airport and Route 684 are in the Kensico Reservoir's watershed. Route 684 is a major highway that has 12 outflows that go directly into the reservoir: adding another major pollutant source like a parking complex will further strain the integrity of our water.

The idea that more than doubling the parking for the Airport will reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the number of car trips to the airport is a dangerous fallacy. It is estimated that on the occasion of peak demand with our present plane traffic, the airport could use 400 more parking spots. So I contend that these extra 1050 parking spaces would ultimately mean more planes! The added planes will increase air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and this will thus vastly outweigh any reduction from fewer car trips to the Airport.

### **Terminal Use Agreement**

DOT Deputy Commissioner Stanton has told me that Westchester's agreement with the FAA mandates that the Airport remain available for flights 24 hours a day. This agreement is for 4 passenger planes or 240 passengers per half hour, during all 24 hours of the day. Right now night flights are not in demand, but the potential to increase use during that time would be enhanced by a surplus of available parking. With the Terminal Use Agreement (formerly known as the TCA) there are presently about 10 daily slots available; there are also 7-10 free slots in the early morning (6:00-6:30 AM) and at night (10PM-12:30AM). With additional parking it would make flying early or late easier. Just three years ago there were many mid-day slots available; that was changed with the arrival of Jet Blue, resulting in a sharp increase in passengers.

### **Increase in Pollution**

More planes means more pollution over the Reservoir, more noise, more fugitive deicing effluent from both planes and runways, and more air pollution for the county. Recently, in an effort to decrease air pollution at the airport, all 25 ground support trucks were replaced with non polluting new electric vehicles. The benefits of that positive step would be erased by an increase of planes.

There is another factor. FAA airspace redesign, if it goes into effect, would cause the pollution right above the airport to be more compressed and have a more intense effect. Part of their Plan is to change the three layers over the North East Airports to five layers thus bringing the over flight ceiling down to 2 thousand from 3 thousand feet.

### **Public Transportation**

Airports all over the world have found creative ways to limit their parking and encourage public transportation. Westchester can do the same! There are already Airport shuttles from hotels in White Plains and business complexes such as the Summit. DOT is now providing public bus service at a nominal cost to the passengers from the White Plains railroad station and other places, and hopefully more of the public will avail themselves of this.

### **Westchester County Resolution**

We are very appreciative of three resolutions. The first was passed by Westchester County, the owner of this airport, followed by the NY State Assembly and, finally, the NY Senate asking for no more gates, hangers, heavier planes, and longer runways, and **no more parking**. While we have as much land as La Guardia airport, Westchester County deliberately and wisely mandated a modest parking structure so as to prevent the expansion of this Airport, mindful of its proximity to the Kensico Reservoir's water supply.

Under present environmental law this Airport would never be allowed to be built and has been called an 'environmental disaster'. Our clear mandate is to protect the pristine, affordable and irreplaceable water supply of lower NY State.

### **Change of Zoning**

Presently the Town Board of North Castle would have to vote to change its zoning to allow this parking complex. This change would also apply to many other town properties: it cannot be limited to this parcel. We would hope that the Board does not do so! By maintaining its present zoning, North Castle would likely be immune from any lawsuit challenging a legislative decision by the Board not to enact a zoning code amendment.

The developer needs a use variance. On appeal, he would have the arduous task of proving that there is no other economically feasible use for this property under North Castle's present zoning.

### **Conclusion**

**While the proposed parking structure is not on Airport property it is being built solely for the Airport and would encourage more planes, pollution and threats to our water. It seems to be in direct contradiction to the intent of the County and State Resolutions.**