



THE TAOS NEWS

Best U.S. Weekly Paper- NNA 2007, 2008, 2010
Inland Press Nation's Best Weekly Newspaper 2009

My Turn

In support of the airport expansion

Pavel Lukes

The Taos News, 11/20/2014

“If you would measure the heartbeat of a city, take the pulse of its airport.” — General William “Billy” Mitchell.

Almost 30 years after airport expansion was first proposed, a small yet vocal minority continues to obstruct its implementation. These “nattering nabobs of negativism” (Spiro Agnew, 1970) would kill what promises to be our most important and vital link to economic prosperity.

I want to focus on the irrational, misguided, uninformed, and the fear based arguments opposing the expansion. One concern was about aircraft dumping fuel and polluting the catchment cisterns at Greater World Earth Ship community.

Well, not only are the current and future aircraft capable of landing in Taos not equipped with such capability, but why would they do such a wasteful thing after having paid in excess of \$5 per gallon for it?

Furthermore, if this their real concern, why did they build cisterns under our skies? The airspace over their community has never been off limits as a “No Fly Zone?” So, for their peace of mind, why don't they have their water tested now and then test it after the airport expansion goes through? Until then, the EPA has their backs.

In a past issue of the online publication *Taos Friction*, it was stated by a concerned citizen, “We will end up with crumbling adobes, broken windows; spooked by roaring aircraft, livestock will be committing suicide en mass by running into fences.” This hysterical story has repeated itself since the Wright Brothers first flight, but it is unsupported by any evidence.

Any airport is subject to changes, which include expansion. Didn't you see that planes landing and taking off were when you bought property here? Where is your own responsibility in all of this? Don't turn to our entire community to mitigate your own past decision, if you now regret it.

Now they say, “I want Taos to stay the same.” That is all well and good for those who don't have to work for a living, but most of us do and there are not many well paying jobs.

An expanded airport will bring more. But without economic advances, Taos won't stay the same. Things will continue to get worse.

“I don't want my taxes to pay for the expansion”, is another common theme. Well you don't, the FAA money is derived via aviation taxes, and is thus paid for by the fliers.

Now, the really good one — it is only for the rich! The opposite is true. By standing in the way of the airport expansion, the same people who don't have to work for living and want Taos stay the same are the ones denying other Taosenos the opportunity to improve their lives. Who are the anonymous people funding the lawsuit against the expansion? Not those who need jobs.

This town has been losing its young people due to the absence of a promising future.

There are few good reasons for them to return to our abysmal economy, other than family ties. A few loud, angry people are taking hope away from the next generation, intentionally or otherwise.

No business will consider opening shop in a community devoid of a well-functioning regional airport (Pennsylvania DOT study.) Every such study from towns all over the country speaks in unison of economic and growth, big boosts to local economy and strengthening the tax bases! With our expanding Broadband, we need more high tech companies like Siriusware and other clean industry firms.

But they won't come here without adequate access.

It's time for our political leaders at the town and the county to become resolute in getting the work at the airport going immediately. Do not let the noisy, illogical opponents steal Taos' promise to our youth of a promising future. Our educated youth will return if we provide the jobs and economy that will make them want to. Do the right thing for them and for our current workforce who struggle to support families. Otherwise, you are relegating the current and future Taos workforce to perpetually inferior low paying jobs, absence of opportunities and all the ills that go with these things. Thirty years of waiting for updating and making our airport all it can be for the has been long enough!

Pavel Lukes, a Taos resident, is a pilot and real estate agent.