



THE TAOS NEWS

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My Turn

Airport economics

Seth Brown

The Taos News, 7/23/2015

To comment on the county hearing July 14. Floyd Lopez, the attorney for the town of Taos, stated to the county commission, that airport opponents are making false claims about the safety problems of the new airport.

Airport opponents are saying that a gravel crosswind relief runway shorter than the original airport should have been built long ago.

The safety problem with the new 8,600-foot runway is as follows. Large aircraft will use the new runway predominantly even though it is oriented perpendicular to the prevailing wind because those craft need a long runway that can withstand the weight and momentum of the aircraft the new runway is designed for.

This will cause two serious safety issues. The first is the fact that lighter craft will have to use the old runway whenever the prevailing wind is blowing while at the same time heavy craft that can better withstand crosswinds will be using the new runway. This causes two intersecting flight patterns .

The second problem. On the new runway heavy craft will have to turn into the predominant crosswinds when landing called crabbing so there will be heavy stress on the wheel struts that hit the runway sideways instead of parallel to the tires, which according to Lopez can tear a strut off the aircraft.

This second safety issue is a design flaw of the new runway allowing bigger aircraft into Taos. Lopez showed a photograph of a large craft in crabbing mode, then suggested that airport opponents are responsible for this safety issue occurring if the new runway is not built.

Lopez then says the new \$24 million jetport will only be used 5 percent of the time. He went on with this kind of nonsense at the county hearing for two hours. The room was packed with airport protesters who left because it took so long for public comment to begin.

There is a pattern in other ski communities with expanded airports attracting private jets of the very wealthy. Is this private jet traffic and military use also not going to use the new jetport 95 percent of the time?

There is so much subterfuge with this airport and so much is being spent to defeat majority opposition in Taos.

Why did the real estate agents of Taos pay for a full page add supporting the airport. There are many indications that big plans are being made behind closed doors for Taos. Are some of our elected officials involved in those plans?

Whoever is planning all this knows full well that people with deep roots in Taos will not be able to afford what is coming. Add devaluation of 650 homes near the airport.

No wonder our commissioners had no comment after two long days of hearings.

The July 14 hearing was strange indeed. Three of the four remaining commissioners simply adopted a long FAA-inspired statement that stated that the new runway would have no effect on traditional land use or the 650 houses surrounding the new runway.

By voting yes to this FAA statement commissioners Tom Blankenhorn, Mark Gallegos and Jim Fambro voted for FAA policy and against the majority in Taos.

Why are our politicians refusing to honor the majority here even when the problems are obvious?

Farmland in Arroyo Seco has inflated 60 times faster than wages paid at Taos Ski Valley since it opened in 1955. Politicians approving infrastructure catering to the wealthiest sector is costing so much that we are losing our land.

We don't want this beautiful very old agricultural community to be sold out to those who will come in their private jets to compete for the land that we want to keep and even buy for growing food to sustain our families. We need to take back our government in Taos or developers will have their way and our farmland will disappear.

Please participate in this as it develops; it is costing quite a bit to fund the lawsuit so the public can have a voice in this situation.

Seth Brown is a Taos resident.