

Public Testimony for Board of Alders Finance Committee public hearing on Tweed / Avport agreement.
Lynne Bonnett, 675 Townsend Ave, New Haven CT 06512
August 30, 2021

Dear Finance Committee members and Chairperson:

I intend to testify in person tomorrow evening but wanted to be sure to get my comments on the record.

By now you have heard multiple concerns from citizens about the following:

- Lack of transparency, the agreement provided to the public was/is missing sections, the public was not able to get their questions answered at the last public meeting at Nathan Hale School last week. Financial information about the full scope of the cost, future liabilities to be borne by citizens of the City of New Haven and the State of CT is missing.
- All available predictions about climate change indicate that this proposed expansion will be risky and costly. East Haven is not committed to building their airport terminal. The Environmental Assessment has not been done. There are no contingency clauses in the 43-year agreement that protect us. Once you agree to this incomplete proposal you will not have any other opportunity to revise it or amend it in any way. Performance review is twenty years out in the agreement and it is not specified what type of review it is or if it can address problems along the way.

Senator Looney recommended that we do a study comparing Tweed to Sikorsky airports. What happened to that proposal? Right of the top of my head I can see that Sikorsky has major advantages:

- 1) it is not built on a coastal wetland
- 2) it is not built in the middle of residential neighborhoods
- 3) it is close to a major highway
- 4) it is halfway between Bradley and White Plains and could easily serve the South Central Region
- 5) it is close enough for New Haven residents to not feel so inconvenienced by a drive to Hartford or NYC
- 6) people may still have options to fly to more locations, maybe even some hubs that are major connecting points.

YOU HAVE CHOICES

Economic development does not depend upon a bigger Tweed Airport. The Community Foundation of Greater New Haven presented a ten-year retrospective study on cities that thrived over the past ten years done by the Brookings Institute. It was not those with Walmarts or Amazons or large sport teams or other big-ticket items but rather those that had small business that were inclusive. New Haven is already investing in small entrepreneurial efforts through groups such as Collab. I support economic development and look forward to more people of color joining the fire department, the police department, city government and our educational institutions and starting businesses.

Debt. Many of you have been told that New Haven needs to do this because we owe so much money already. In my mind, and I'm not alone, this is an Afghanistan moment: do we pour millions (billions?) more into this venture in hopes that it will miraculously make money (we still have to pay back the money we owe-\$20 million?) and risk adding more money to this debt that will only harm future generations? Or do we say enough, let's try to maximize what we have now.

I urge all of you to pause this process and protect us by at least:

- 1) getting the missing information in the agreement and presenting it to the public
- 2) building contingencies into the agreement that offer REAL protection for the residents of the City of New Haven and the State of CT should this plan fail to deliver as promised.
- 3) follow up with Senator Looney's suggestion that we do a study comparing Tweed with Sikorsky before signing this 43-year agreement.
- 4) Require transparency by providing all communication and documents involving Tweed Airport and the City of New Haven since Mayor Elicker became Mayor to the public for review.
- 5) Insist on community benefits that include ROBUST Air Monitoring for residents within a mile of the airport. In addition to the usual vehicle exhaust studies indicating adverse health effects from increased exposure to vehicle exhaust (www.ehhi.org) we now know that jet fuel is implicated in thyroid disease because of its perchlorate content <https://mindd.org/environmental-toxins-thyroid-diseases/> The community benefit agreement must address the adverse health effects on the population due to increased exposure to jet fuel and automobile emissions.

I hope that you pause and consider the full implications of what you decide. I think that anyone looking at this agreement from the outside could only wonder how a city government could put its citizens at such risk. Please exercise due diligence since you are the only entity with the power to effect any changes in the proposed agreement and its approval processes. This agreement is incomplete and important information is lacking. How on earth can you be expected to sign such a document?

Sincerely,
/Lynne Bonnett/
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