



CAMBRIDGE LICENSE COMMISSION CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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Commission Executive Officer

TO: Robert W. Healy, City Manager
FROM: James T. McDavitt, License Commission Chair *James T. McDavitt*
RE: Air Traffic Noise (Council Order #5 on February 4, 1991)
DATE: March 1, 1991

Please be advised that Chief Licensing Investigator Marlene Knights and I have conferred with Nancy Timmerman, Noise Abatement Supervisor at MASSPORT's Noise Abatement Division. Telephone: 561-1649. Ms. Timmerman states MASSPORT has no existing written data on schedules of air traffic flying over Cambridge. But Ms. Timmerman orally explained the existing system to us. She said that the decision whether or not to fly over Cambridge is made by the Air Traffic Controllers, and the four factors used to make this decision are: wind, weather, runway location, and "demand category". The term "demand category" means the number of aircraft arriving at or departing from Logan at approximately the same time, and Ms. Timmerman pointed out that, of course, wind and weather will vary with the time of year.

Ms. Timmerman said that the Runway which would affect Cambridge most is Runway #33. It is the longest of all runways and all of the largest aircraft must use Runway #33 to take off. On an average day, about 35 large jets depart from Runway #33, and on average a total of about 350 jets take off from Logan daily. Therefore, on average, Cambridge air space gets about 10% of the aircraft leaving Logan.

However, Ms. Timmerman said that whenever there is a strong north-west wind, ALL aircraft departs from Runway #33 and flies over Cambridge.

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Robert W. Healy
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Ms. Timmerman also said that due to high consumer demand at rush hours, Runway #33 (affecting Cambridge) gets most heavily used between 7-10 a.m. and 3-7 p.m.

Ms. Timmerman also clarified that jets landing at Logan never come in over Cambridge airspace, and that therefore Cambridge is affected only by a percentage of the jets departing Logan.

In the course of our investigation, we came across an article in the current edition of the South End News. The article covers MASSPORT's monitoring of aircraft noise audible in the South End neighborhood. I am enclosing a copy of this article.

A follow up inquiry to MASSPORT inspired by the enclosed news article clarifies that MASSPORT will consider setting up noise monitoring devices to measure aircraft noise audible in a particular neighborhood in Cambridge if the City Council or City Manager makes a written request for such noise monitoring to:

Nancy Timmerman, Noise Abatement Supervisor
c/o MASSPORT Aviation--Noise Abatement Division
Old Tower Building, 4th Floor
Logan International Airport
Boston, MA 02128
Telephone: 561-1649

If the City Council or a particular neighborhood association wants someone from MASSPORT to attend a meeting and personally explain jet routes and noise abatement policies, a request for a speaker may be made by anyone to:

Francesca deVan, Assistant Director
MASSPORT Public Affairs Department
Transportation Building--4th Floor
Ten Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116
Telephone: 973-5600

Please advise if there are any questions or comments on the foregoing matter.

Enclosure.

The South End News

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Neighborhood sound check

Airport officials to start measuring local airplane noise in response to complaints of sudden increase

by Steve LeBlanc

State officials have agreed to install noise monitoring equipment on South End buildings in an effort to document what some neighbors describe as a sudden increase in airplane noise over the neighborhood.

South End residents who have been bothered by airplane noise say they are hopeful that the monitoring equipment could help prove their claims that airplane noise has gotten much worse in recent months.

Worcester St. resident Kurt Walter says the noise is more than just an annoyance. "I have to sleep on my living room sofa with earplugs and a pillow over my head," Walter said.

Early this week, a technician from Massport, the state agency that runs Logan airport, installed a noise monitor on the roof of Walter's home. The device will remain there for up to a week, recording noise made by planes flying overhead.

Walter says he welcomes the

chance to document the noise that's been keeping him up nights. He is not the only local resident hoping that the device will prove that airplane noise has suddenly gotten much worse.

Long-time South Ender Kay Gibbs said she also wants Massport to install a noise monitoring device on the roof of her Rutland St. home. Since last September, Gibbs said, the

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Noise check promised

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amount of airplane noise has been the worst she can remember in 25 years in the neighborhood, a point she wants to prove to Massport.

"They have no idea of the level of noise in the South End because they don't have any devices installed. That's why I'm asking for this," Gibbs said. "I want to have proof. I want to make sure that this is not my imagination. . . I've been woken up at 6 a.m. by plane noise and I'm a sound sleeper."

Gibbs said she has had a hard time getting useful information from MassPort, claiming that many answers to questions she has asked were so technical they were nearly useless.

"They're willing to rain down all this technical information, but they're not able to answer basic questions," Gibbs said. "You have to have a Ph.D. in airplanes to get a simple question answered."

Larry Coleman, MassPort's assistant director for aviation, said he could not explain the reports of an apparent increase in noise over the South End this year. Coleman stated that the percentage of flights coming off Runway 27 were "consistent" with past years.

Coleman did say that Massport is installing permanent noise monitoring devices across the city, including one in the South End. The devices will allow the agency to accurately monitor the noise over the neighborhood over long periods of time.

In the meantime, however, the temporary devices installed on roofs in the neighborhood will give Massport a chance to make some preliminary sound

checks.

"It will give us some indication, based on the noise levels, of the position of the aircraft relative to that point," Coleman said. "It will also give us some base of information to compare with future information." Coleman said the agency will install the monitoring devices to all neighbors who ask for them.

Calls to hot-line up

Neighbors involved in the issue point to a sharp increase in the number of calls received by a hot-line run by MassPort as further evidence that a serious problem exists.

During all of 1989, Massport's noise hotline recorded only two complaints of airplane noise from the South End. That number jumped to 28 in 1990. Last month alone, Massport received 17 complaints. The sudden increase in complaints is another indication that, airplane noise this year is significantly worse, residents said.

Airplanes that fly over the South End take off from Runway 27 at Logan, fly to a point over Boston Harbor, then head southwest, over the Fort Point Channel, passing over several neighborhoods, including Back Bay, the South End, parts of Roxbury and Jamaica Plain.

Coleman said Massport is conducting an environmental impact review to study ways to ensure that planes stay on course and over the channel. That study is the result of a successful lawsuit filed in the early 1980s by the Runway 27 Coalition.

The Jamaica Plain-based citizen's group had charged the FAA with allowing a change in flight paths off



UP ON THE ROOF: South Enders Kurt Walter (center) and Kelly Clark (right) watch as Pike Cook, a technician with Massport, installs a noise detection device atop the building Walters lives in. The device was installed as part of an effort to see how much noise airplanes cause flying over the neighborhood. (Rose Marston photo)

Runway 27 without studying how the changes would affect Boston's inner neighborhoods.

If it gets South Enders involved in the environmental review process, the situation will have had at least one positive impact, according to State Rep. Byron Rushing, who has discussed the

noise problem with Gibbs and others.

Although the study may help fine-tune flight paths in a way to minimize noise, the basic problem may remain as long as Logan stays in East Boston, Rushing admitted. The long-range solution, he added, is the construction of a second airport outside the city.



EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL 349-4300
FAX 349-4307

March 4, 1991

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In reference to Awaiting Report Item No. 26, regarding increased air traffic noise over Cambridge, please find attached a response from James T. McDavitt, License Commission Chair, relative to this matter.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev
attachment

CONSENT AGENDA

S-348

Response to Awaiting Report Item No. 26
regarding increased air traffic noise over
Cambridge.

In City Council,

March 4, 1991.

Placed on file.