

# The Sag Harbor Express.

## Residents Concerned About What East Hampton Airport Regulations Could Mean for Montauk

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*A grassroots organization in Montauk asked the town board to consider what regulations at East Hampton airport could mean for the island's eastern most airport. Photo by Cara Rooney.*

**By Mara Certic**

As the East Hampton Town Board scheduled public hearings this week for controversial new airport regulations, which would effectively ban helicopters from East Hampton Airport on summer weekends as well as impose a strict nighttime curfew, another group aired concerns about the negative effects the laws could have on neighboring airports.

The town board on February 4 unveiled draft legislation, which it said would reduce airport traffic by a third, and is designed to tackle a large portion of the noise problem on the East End.

East Hampton officials maintain that they effectively gained proprietary control over the airport at the beginning of the year when the town's commitments under Federal Aviation Administration grants expired, and the town opted out of future funding from the federal agency.

But Jeremy Samuelson, executive director of the Concerned Citizens of Montauk, said the new restrictions on East Hampton Airport could have unintended consequences for the small Montauk Airport. He read a letter to the board on Tuesday, February 10, asking it to weigh those consequences.

"CCOM believes strongly that the town board has a responsibility to understand and describe possible impacts to Montauk stemming from the proposed legislation," he said. "Demonstrate whether alternatives to the proposed legislation could achieve similar results for East Hampton while minimizing or eliminating impacts for Montauk and identify specific measures that could minimize impacts to Montauk."

There is concern that the new restrictions at the East Hampton Airport, could result in a spike in helicopter traffic over Montauk's privately owned 40-acre airport.

"The aviation consultants working for East Hampton Town should be tasked with determining where traffic currently landing at East Hampton Airport is most likely to land in the event restrictions are adopted, including projections for Montauk Airport, Gabreski Airport and the Southampton Dune Road heliport," Mr. Samuelson's letter stated.

He added that the town should begin working with the FAA, Senator Charles Schumer and U.S. Representative Lee Zeldin to put in place a mandatory over-water approach for helicopters landing at Montauk Airport.

One change has already been made to the legislation, which was first proposed last week. That alteration is in the definition of the types of "noisy" aircraft that would be subjected to an extended curfew from 8 p.m. through to 9 a.m. These noisy aircraft would now just be those with published approach levels above 91 decibels for the purposes of the law.

The town will soon publish and make available lists of which aircraft fall into the noisy category. The amendment to the law means that the restrictions would now only affect 24 percent of all operations and would still address 67 percent of the complaints (without the change, it was estimated 31 percent of flights would be affected, dealing with 74 percent of the noise problem.)

Public hearings will take place for each of the four proposed airport regulations at a special early meeting at LTV Studios on Thursday, March 5, at 4:30 p.m. in order to provide substantial time for the ample public comment expected.