

## **Falk Rejects Airport Noise Control Improvements**

This fall, the Schenk / Atwood / Starkweather / Yahara Neighborhood Association (SASYNA) wrote to County Executive Kathleen Falk asking for additional steps to curb county airport noise in the neighborhood. Suggestions included installation of a noise monitoring system, creation of a curfew for loud aircraft, improved public access to the noise control program, better representation on the noise control committee, and relocation of military jet training flights.

In her November 3<sup>rd</sup> response, Falk rejected or ignored the suggestions proposed by SASYNA. Instead, Falk chose to describe past airport noise projects and discuss the difficulties of funding any additional noise control measures.

As suggested in Falk's response, neighborhood residents attended the November 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the noise committee at the airport. At the semi-annual meeting, airport staff summarized recent noise complaints and described upcoming projects likely to change airport noise. The meeting ran longer than usual as residents from eastside neighborhoods had many questions. It also provided an opportunity to discuss the SASYNA suggestions for better noise control. Ironically, some discussion could not be heard over the roar of passing military jets.

At the noise meeting, a summary of complaint activity was presented by David Novak, the airport noise control officer. During the six-month period of April to September, the Noise Complaint Line (i.e. 246-5841) received 1,292 telephone calls. This compares to 136 complaints which occurred during the same period in 2001. Rather than rely solely on a complaint line, SASYNA had suggested the installation of a noise monitoring system to provide an objective measurement of the success of the airport's noise strategy. Use of a monitoring system was discussed at the meeting, but airport staff concluded that this system was too expensive.

Other issues discussed at the meeting was how increasing airport traffic was impeding the ability to follow the counter-flow strategy. This strategy encourages planes to land and take off to the north, away from populated areas of Madison. At the meeting, air traffic controllers noted that increased air traffic is forcing them to send more airplanes over the city. The airport recently announced that 2002 would be a record year, projecting over 1.5 million passengers. This is a 12.5 percent increase over 2001.

Continuing dialogue with county officials, SASYNA chair Mark McFadden recently sent a response to Falk. He notes the neighborhood's disappointment with her lack of support for better noise control. In the recent letter, SASYNA notes, "At the November 7th meeting we were told (a noise monitoring system) was too expensive. But the following week the airport announced yet another multi-million dollar project, \$24 million to move Starkweather Creek so a runway could be lengthened."

The SASYNA response to Falk concludes, "As the airport grows more successful and noisier, our neighborhood and the eastside of Madison in general, will continue to be a casualty. We hope you will not let the county airport run on automatic pilot, but demand that it be responsive to its impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods. As public intervener you fought to protect residents from

pollution and sprawl. We ask that you keep up the fight on our behalf.”

At the December 17<sup>th</sup> SASYNA council meeting, the topic of airport noise was added to the agenda for the upcoming spring General Membership Meeting. Airport noise control staff would be invited to meet residents and discuss plans for reducing impacts on the neighborhood.

Correspondence between County Executive Falk and SASYNA can be found at the neighborhood’s web site, [www.sasyna.org](http://www.sasyna.org). If you would like to participate in efforts to improve the airport’s noise control plan, you can contact County Executive Falk at the City-County Building, Room 421, email: [falk@co.dane.wi.us](mailto:falk@co.dane.wi.us), attend the Airport Noise Committee meetings held twice each year, or submit complaints to the Noise Complaint Line, 246-5841.

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