

Flying under the radar

The Port of Olympia will soon be making one of its most important decisions as Port Commissioners determine the future quality of life in beautiful Thurston County. Flying under the radar, obscured by the uproar over the proposed mega airport site in Central Thurston County, is the Master Plan Update (MPU) of the existing Olympia Regional Airport which Port Commissioners will vote on in February.

Port staff say the “revised preferred alternative” in the MPU is not an expansion because the size of the airport will not change. But plans for infrastructure revision would support an increase of up to 315 takeoffs and 315 landings per day. (Currently there are approximately 100.) With the addition of more commercial services, the FAA would probably be in charge of the flight numbers, types of planes, and times of operation. Thurston County residents would have no say.

Over the decades, the Port has incrementally lengthened and strengthened runways for larger jets that can carry cargo or 100 passengers. Recently, permit applications have been submitted for building 3.3 million square feet of warehousing near the Olympia Airport. This doesn't seem like a coincidence; cargo is expected.

Welcome to the new Renton. Goodbye to clean air and quiet neighborhoods, rural lands, and farmland. Goodbye to years of efforts to protect endangered species in our parks and wildlife preserves.

To protect Thurston County, Port Commissioners must work to assure limitations on airport capacity-enhancing projects and reject the MPU's “preferred alternative.”

Sue Danver, Olympia

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