

August 27, 2020

**To the North Haven Select Board, Jonathan Demmons (Chair), Linda Darling (Vice-Chair), Patricia Lannon, Jeremiah MacDonald, and Alexander Curtis:**

We write to you with profound concern.

We are alarmed by the radical expansion of air traffic over North Haven this summer. Starting at 7 a.m., loud planes roar over our heads, all over the island, at all times of day—landing and leaving from the Watson’s airstrip. The egregious noise, pollution, invasion of privacy, and damage to quality of life is starkly inconsistent with the peaceful island we have known for generations and the sustainable future this community promotes. Confused and dismayed, we reached out to the Watson family to inquire about the disturbing increase in air traffic, an invasive disruption that affects the entire North Shore and much of the island.

This past weekend the Watson family shared the Town Administrator’s March 9 letter detailing his intention to acquire control of the Watson airstrip and expand it into a commercial airport. We were shocked to read that the Town Administrator threatened to take the property from the Watsons if they refused to cooperate. Seizing property through eminent domain without clear public exigency is unconstitutional, and it has no place in this small island community—not ever. This threat is an astonishing assault on property rights without precedent here. It fails to consider how neighboring owners and residents are impacted, and reflects an absence of transparency around the town’s development plans. Most alarming, we discover no coherent vision, no long-term study, no consideration of how a vast expansion of inefficient flights will affect North Haven’s culture, ecosystem, economy, and ethos.

The Administrator’s letter rationalizing the exercise of eminent domain rests on an unsubstantiated presumption that North Haven has a sudden, urgent, “exigent” need for a new and significantly expanded airport. We do not agree that such a need exists, nor do we believe adequate consideration of other options has been undertaken to address real concerns about greatly expanding air traffic to and from the island.

The Town has unrestricted access to the Watson airstrip for emergency evacuation, which has worked well for decades and which we, as neighbors and residents—both year-round and seasonal—fully support. Additional needs to convey passengers or packages can certainly be met through far more efficient and less intrusive options than airplanes.

The Administrator’s letter points to environmental and other concerns, including potential litigation which the town might confront when seeking to develop an alternative site for an airport. The implication that such concerns do not exist with the Watson airstrip is categorically false. The undersigned are stakeholders whose concerns have been entirely disregarded. Furthermore, the litigious response that the Town Administrator encountered while exploring a

South Shore airport option more likely reflects an island-wide negative view of increased air traffic rather than an insulated pocket of resistance.

As property owners, taxpayers, and long-time members of the North Haven community, we need to participate in and contribute to planning of future airport development and/or increased traffic to the island. We are all in this together. An approach that we have seen successfully applied in other communities would be for the Select Board to solicit an ad-hoc committee of representative stakeholders to gather input in a transparent way, to identify relevant concerns, and to provide options for best addressing those concerns for North Haven as a whole. The summer trial of drastically increased air traffic at the Watson airfield ends on September 30, and we seek assurance before then that we will have a voice in the decision-making process going forward. We await your thoughts on how best to proceed. North Haven is a delicate ecosystem and an intimate community that we must work together to protect and support.

Respectfully,

**Bouzha Cookman & William Lehr**, 419 & 421 North Shore

**Lynn Hamlen**, 250 North Shore

**Robert Holmgren, Anita Spertus, Katherine & Erik Serrano-Berntsen**, 524 North Shore

**William & Mara Holmgren**, 651 North Shore

**William, Alice, Pack & Maxine Janes**, 368 North Shore

**Orlando Johnson**, 453 North Shore

**Evan & Jane Lattimore**, 457 North Shore

**Ranlet Miner Jr.**, 406 North Shore

**Susan, Frank, Baird & Charles Ruch**, 346 North Shore

**Michelle & Henri Sans**, 369 North Shore

**Lili Wright & Peter Graham**, 480 North Shore

**Christopher Wright**, 479 North Shore