

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations Resolution on Fairfax County Proposed Plan Amendment 2020-CW-3CP, Airport Noise Policy

WHEREAS the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations (the Federation) recognizes the paramount importance of the Northern Virginia airports (Dulles International and Reagan National) to the economy of the Washington Metropolitan region; and

WHEREAS the Federation strongly supports facilitation of citizen and neighborhood engagement and participation in the development and amendment of Fairfax County's Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance, incorporating the best and most recent scientific data available regarding the health and safety of county residents; and

WHEREAS the Federation strongly supports long-standing environmental noise policy to protect residential uses and their occupants' safety and health from the detrimental impacts of airport noise, including the Comprehensive Plan text recommending the use of updated noise contour data, so that the best and most current noise contour data must be considered during the review of land use applications; and

WHEREAS the updated noise contours for Dulles Airport¹ were published in 2019 by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA), and the Fairfax County Planning Commission in 2020 requested that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors authorize for advertising the updated noise contours, and maintain the long-standing policies protecting residential uses from airport noise, endangering residents' safety and health, but the Board of Supervisors has chosen not to do so, instead retaining the outdated noise contours from 1993 (which do not reflect the addition of the fifth runway, and other operational changes), and relaxing the noise protection policy in the Comprehensive Plan, to allow additional new residential development in Land Unit J, between the 60 and 65 DNL noise contours; and

WHEREAS the Board of Supervisors has now authorized study of another amendment to the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, which would relax the noise protection policy countywide, and allow new residential development between the 60 and 65 DNL noise contours countywide, not limited to Land Unit J, causing

¹https://www.flydulles.com/sites/flydulles.com/files/legacyfiles/final_dulles_updated_noise_contours_map_at_public_hearing_february_28_2019_and_shared_with_localities_april_2029.pdf

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potential impairment to residents' safety and health, but still has refused to adopt the updated MWAA noise contours;

WHEREAS the decision by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to proceed with this Comprehensive Plan Amendment concerning aircraft noise policy is based solely on economics. No reference can be found that the County conducted research or studied the safety and risk factors associated with locating residential communities under 60-65 DNL noise contours. The long term negative effects of resident exposure to aircraft noise, especially in the 3 developments near Dulles referenced in paragraph 1 far outweigh the economic benefits².

WHEREAS the 45 dBA interior noise mitigation standard proposed in this subject plan amendment is ineffective and misleading. The interior noise mitigation standard is incapable of effectively mitigating interior noise levels because it is not attainable in the Dulles aircraft noise environment between the 60 and 65 DNL contours. The standard is misleading because it implies that peak noise levels during aircraft flyovers would be little different from the noise level in a quiet home in a quiet neighborhood, and that would not be the case. The 45 dBA interior noise mitigation standard is not useful and risks the welfare of residents. It should be deleted from the plan amendment³.

WHEREAS none of the four developments recommended for approval by the Planning Commission since the 45 dBA standard was introduced in the Westfields

² MVCCA Transportation Committee Points of Concern about the New Plan Amendment and Airport Noise Policy memo dated 7 March 2022
http://www.fcfa.org/pdf/20220307_MVCCATransportationCommitteePointsofConcernabouttheAirportNoisePolicyAmendment.pdf

³ **Proposed Noise Mitigation Guidance Is Ineffective and Misleading. PA 2020-CW-3CP Should Not Be Adopted** white paper dated 14 Jun 2022 submitted to Board of Supervisors for Hearing 28 June by Clyde A. Miller, available at http://www.fcfa.org/pdf/20220614_PA2020-CW-3CP_ProposedNoiseMitigationGuidanceIsIneffectiveandMisleading.pdf

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amendment proffered to meet the standard. Three of the four developments proffered to meet a 45 DNL interior noise standard. However, a 45 DNL standard would not adequately protect home interiors and would provide no protection against the possibility that conflicts between residents and Dulles airport over aircraft noise issues would escalate to the level characteristic of National airport today (76,000 noise complaints in 2018), now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Federation specifically requests that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors forthwith authorize the necessary advertising for adoption and incorporation of the updated 2019 MWAA noise contour map into applicable County documents, including immediate authorization of any applicable Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance amendments, so that the best available scientific data, including the most recent and accurate noise contour delineations, will safeguard residents' safety and health, and must be considered by County staff and decisionmakers in a timely fashion, in the review process for pending rezonings and other land use applications.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Federation strongly opposes further delays by the Board of Supervisors and its committees in the adoption of the updated 2019 MWAA noise contour map, while significant land use applications affected by the noise contours continue to be reviewed and approved ignoring the best scientific data available, using outdated noise contours from 1993.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Federation strongly requests that the Board of Supervisors comply with the requests of MWAA to provide it with notice, upon acceptance or authorization, of all land use applications, and including any pertinent ordinance or Comprehensive Plan amendments, located either within the 60-65 DNL noise contours or higher, or within the Airport Noise Impact Overlay District [ANIOD], and to provide MWAA staff with copies of any corresponding staff reports upon publication.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Federation requests the county develop effective standards for interior noise mitigation by surveying related standards and practices of major airports that have successfully accommodated residential developments between the 60 and 65 DNL contours. In the process, the county should document in a staff report the basis upon which the Board and county

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residents can be confident that new developments between the contours would provide homes compatible with the airport noise environment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Federation requests that the Board of Supervisors require, in any residential development approvals within the noise contours of 60-65 DNL or higher, the provision of aviation easements, as well as comprehensive written disclosures to prospective purchasers, including potential safety and health consideration and a legible diagram depicting flight paths in proximity to the development.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Federation strongly opposes the further weakening of Fairfax County environmental policies to facilitate approvals of new residential development on inappropriate sites impacted by airport noise, which approvals aggravate the conflicts between residential and airport uses and may impair and jeopardize future airport operations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be communicated forthwith to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, as well as the Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and the Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC) and other local decisionmakers.