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April 11, 2011

Honorable Mark McCouch, President
Horsham Township Council
Horsham Township Municipal Building
1025 Horsham Road
Horsham, PA 19044

Dear Mr. McCouch:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) represents the general aviation interests of over 400,000 members, more than two-thirds of the nation's pilots, including over 13,000 in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. AOPA is committed to ensuring the future viability and economic development of general aviation airports and their facilities as a vital part of a state and national transportation system without unjust discrimination to tenants and users of the airport.

We are writing to express our extreme disappointment in wording contained in Horsham Township Council Resolution No. 2011-8. This resolution makes statements that are simply not necessarily true and which are misleading.

First, we urge you to reconsider the second clause of the resolution, which states that "airports of any nature have an adverse impact on the quality of life for the residents of the host community". In reality, airports make an invaluable contribution to our quality of life and our public safety and health. Just ask the families of patients carried by Medevac aircraft to trauma centers for life-saving treatment. Or check with disaster victims who benefited from emergency delivery supplies to their local airport after a catastrophe. Consider the workers with good jobs because of the businessmen who chose a community to base their operations because the airport gave them easy access for moving people and goods. Think about homes protected because aerial firefighters who release the fire retardant to prevent wildfires had a base from which to operate. Remember the increased yield and product quality of farms that benefit from agricultural aviation. These are just a few examples of the many ways a nearby airport benefits any community.

The resolution seems to stem from the unsubstantiated assumption that any continuing use of the runway at Willow Grove Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base would follow in line with previous aircraft types. We suggest that this would very likely not be the case. Most General Aviation aircraft that might make use of the airport in a reuse environment would be significantly quieter and smaller than the Navy's past use of the facility.

We encourage you to look at some real-life examples of military airport reuse. The Base Realignment and Closure Act's recent surplus property conveyance of the Brunswick Naval Air Station in the State of Maine is but one example. The community embraced the opportunity to

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obtain and use the airport for civilian airport purposes. The Kestral Aviation Company has recently moved their operations to the site and begun hiring local members of the community to work for what will be a premier aviation manufacturing facility.

Economic development and job creation are critical issues in Pennsylvania, today, as they are across much of the nation. If Horsham Township is truly interested in improving the quality of life for its citizens, we suggest that the Township fully examine the opportunities that might be available through inclusion of an aviation element in any facility reuse plan. Making informed decisions will be critical to any successful reuse of this important public facility. Any exclusion of a proposal that would be in the general public interest is not in the best interests of anyone – especially with taxpayers from across the country who paid for the development of the property.

We appreciate your consideration of our comments. A general aviation civil airport can and should be a significant economic engine for the Township and the region; a fact that has been realized by communities throughout the country.

Sincerely,



Bill Dunn
Vice President
Airport Advocacy

cc: Gregory S. Nesbitt, Esq., Vice President
Andrew Santacroce
Deborah M. Tustin
W. William Whiteside
William T. Walker, Town Manager