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October 2, 2011

To: Mayor Bloom and Honorable City Council members
From: Board of Directors, Friends of Sunset Park (FOSP)
Re: City Council Special Meeting – October 4, 2011 – Agenda Item 4-A

It has become very apparent from the language of the Staff Report for 10/4/11 agenda item 4-A that the City staff is reluctant to pursue airport closure as an option. Not only are they reluctant, but the “Visioning Process” has been tainted with this bias from its inception.

Point C was directed to engage participants “in a conversation focused specifically on ideas to craft a new direction for the future of the airport **as an airport and as a community asset.**” Therefore, their conclusions from the interview process reflected that bias. FOSP previously expressed the opinion that the Point C interview process was biased, and the outcome has revealed that to be true.

The Staff Report mentions in broad terms some of the federal laws, as well as existing airport-related documents and agreements, that have led them to this conclusion. The FOSP Board would like to see a more in depth evaluation of the aforementioned, as well as any other items that may have a bearing on the closure option. We feel it would be beneficial to have an *unbiased outside party* do the evaluations.

So the question arises, if the airport is to continue to exist after the expiration of the 1984 Agreement, what will its character be?

FOSP was hoping that the RAND Corporation findings would offer some appealing options of a more community compatible airport. Unfortunately, the RAND findings revealed in the Staff Report do not address ANY of the major concerns of the community: aircraft emissions, noise, or safety.

Instead we are offered a menu of vanilla items that mostly address usage of the non-aviation land. Although we would welcome the suggested intersection improvement at Airport Avenue and Walgrove, many of the other items put forth would aggravate the most complained about topic in our neighborhood besides the airport: **TRAFFIC. Development of the non-aviation land is not going to make the community view the airport as a “community asset.”** We really expected better from an organization with the stature of RAND.

In addition, the economic impact analysis prepared by HR&A twists data to reflect a pro-airport bias. It fails to separate aviation-related employment from non-aviation em-

ployment at the airport. It compares the “Airport Campus” as a single employer when it is really a collection of small businesses, city services, SMC, and temporary event employment. Many of these employers are NOT dependent on the airport to exist and could flourish without it—but this is not explored in the report. The economic analysis also failed to study any economic benefit (perhaps more favorable) that might be possible if the airport were closed.

Finally, we have heard ad nauseum about the million dollars spent over eight years on the court case related to the City’s ban on C and D jets. Does this amount include salaries of airport staff, City Attorney, etc. which would have been paid out whether the staff was working on the airport court case or not? Why didn’t the Staff Report place the **\$1 million** spent on trying to protect residents from airport impacts in the context of the City’s total expenditures of something like **\$4 billion** over those same eight years? Again, the information in the Staff Report seems to be geared toward a particular outcome in the Airport Visioning process.

At least the \$1 million was well spent in fighting the good fight. David would have been proud of the City, even though we did not prevail against the FAA’s Goliath in this battle.

What *has* been a waste is the money spent on these Phase I consultants’ studies. When we asked for studies to be done about future options for the Airport, we did not include bias in our request.

If the plan is to run the Phase III Focus Groups discussions with same bias reflected in this Staff Report, that is just plain UNACCEPTABLE.

As the Airport Visioning process continues, FOSEP would like the City Council to direct staff to:

1. Provide a more in depth analysis of laws, documents, court cases, etc. that would have bearing on options for the airport’s future. Make the analysis available to the public.
2. Study options available at the expiration of the 1984 Agreement that could reduce the safety, noise, and environmental impacts. (For example, don’t renew or grant leases to businesses that have negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods.)
3. Ensure that the Phase III focus groups are NOT conducted within a biased framework.