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### School board joins Solberg foes

Officials cite "safety threat," learning problems. Owners deny there's any plans to expand.

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By **ANDREA EILENBERGER**  
The Express-Times

READINGTON TWP. | With just a week remaining until township voters decide whether to borrow \$22 million to acquire development rights to the Solberg airport, school board members have come out against an airport expansion plan.

Readington Township Board of Education members unanimously approved a resolution April 25 opposing an expansion they say would endanger students and staff and disturb instruction. Residents will go to the polls May 16 to vote on the bond ordinance.

"All we're asking for is whatever is done ... our concerns are taken into consideration," board of education President Mark Berry said.

Suzy Solberg Nagle, who owns the airport with her brother and sister, said she wishes school officials had approached them to "explain our side."

The township and the owners of Solberg Aviation have long been at odds over the airport's future. Township officials say the owners proposed during negotiations extending the airport's main runway to 5,000 feet and the crosswinds runway to 3,700 feet, while the owners say officials misrepresented the discussions.

They maintain they have no plans for any expansion.

"I think it's very unfortunate (school officials) did something so quickly," Nagle said. The resolution is unnecessary because an expansion is not in the works, she said.

Township officials have said if the airport's main runway was extended to 5,000 feet and the crosswinds runway was extended to 3,700 feet, the safety zone around it must be enlarged under federal and state regulations.

According to a map of the safety zone runways lengthened to reflect the requirements, the Holland Brook School would touch the safety zone and the Readington Middle School would sit just outside.

"Information that has been provided to us is Three Bridges is under the approach pattern for planes landing on the main runway," Berry said.

In the resolution, officials said they believe "landing on an expanded crosswind runway would pose a perpetual and imminent safety threat to the children, staff and visitors at both Holland Brook School and Readington Middle School."

"Occasionally you'll hear a plane at Three Bridges School," but that could change if the runways are extended, Berry said. Larger aircraft capable of landing on longer runways could fly lower, he said.

Besides the safety risks, the noise would hinder teaching and learning at the three schools, he said.

The safety zone is subject to Federal Aviation Association and New Jersey Department of Transportation guidelines for development and safety, according to the township's Web site.

Mayor Gerard Shamey could not be reached for comment Monday.

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