

CRAIG AIRPORT

Neighbors do not want expansion

The word "safety" is being used as a ruse or red herring by the Jacksonville Aviation Authority, its consultants and other corporate aircraft owners currently using Craig Municipal Airport.

These people want to make the public think that the addition of a 2,000-foot runway extension, from 4,000 feet to 6,000 feet, will make the communities surrounding the airport safer.

Several years ago, the JAA tried to expand Craig airport's runway.

This expansion was overwhelmingly defeated by the surrounding community citizens and by the majority of the City Council members when it was brought before them.

Jacksonville's Comprehensive Plan states that the Craig airport runways will not be lengthened. So why is the JAA again pushing its agenda on this issue?

Craig airport had a citizens advisory meeting on Aug. 21. During the presentation, the JAA consultants stated that larger corporate aircraft

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are beginning to land and take off from Craig. These corporate aircraft only meet the minimum landing and takeoff distances and minimum weight limitations.

In many cases, these larger aircraft depart Craig with a minimum takeoff load of fuel and passenger weight just to depart the runway.

They then proceed to another airport to add more fuel before continuing to their final destinations.

Does this sound like it is safe for the surrounding community? Why is this practice even being permitted by JAA or the Federal Aviation Administration? It's not their call. It lies in the hands of the corporate

pilots.

These corporate people want to use Craig because they would prefer not to have to spend 30 extra minutes driving to Jacksonville International Airport.

As a longtime resident living near the airport, and also as a 30-year licensed pilot flying in and out of Craig, I can count on my fingers the number of aviation accidents, with most happening on takeoff.

If the airport is so unsafe, why has it not been closed as a dangerous hazard to the surrounding community?

Lengthening the runway does not help an aircraft that loses an engine at 300 feet after takeoff.

Why should the residents of the surrounding Craig airport communities have to continue fighting the same battle with the JAA over and over again to stop an unwanted airport runway expansion?

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