



# CITY OF WINOOSKI

## CITY COUNCIL

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## Statement in Response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement Issued by the United States Air Force

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Issued: June 18, 2012

The Winooski City Council is issuing this formal statement in response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement issued by the United States Air Force regarding the deployment of the F-35A aircraft to the Vermont Air National Guard at the Burlington International Airport. This statement is made in conjunction with our previously passed Resolution and the attached questions.

We, the Winooski City Council believe it is our responsibility to assure that we make decisions that place Winooski on a sustainable path to our future. We take that responsibility seriously and take action based on careful consideration of facts.

The first facts must be about the City of Winooski. We are an old mill town that seemed to be on the verge of demise many times through the years. Whether the mills closed, promised investments in Model Cities evaporated, or an economic crash delayed a major economic investment, we have consistently found a way to be even better than before. We are in the process of a major renaissance. New people are moving into Winooski to get a start. These folks are refugees, folks downsizing in mid life, and young professionals purchasing their first home. These folks live next to those who have lived in town for many generations. We are proud of our little city of 7,300 people where over twenty languages are spoken. We are proud to hear the number of our residents who love it here. We recognize our responsibility to protect that new energy and investment of time and passion as well as money.

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process has been difficult for our city. The community is divided. We hear from our constituents in meetings, but also on the street, in phone conversations, via e-mail, and in the flower shop. The overwhelming number of public statements demonstrates citizen's desire to stop the

deployment. Privately, we have heard from many people who support the proposed deployment. It is also clear that most citizens of Winooski recognize the service of the Guard to our community and State.

While the Draft EIS issued by the United States Air Force is a thorough analysis of the available data, much of the information is based on projection that make it impossible to understand the flying conditions of the F-35A at the Burlington International Airport. While it is clear that the F-35A will be louder than the F-16, how much louder and the impact of that increase remains unclear. The United States Air Force's Final EIS needs to provide facts that can be relied upon in ascertaining the impacts of these aircraft on our community.

Noise is the defining issue for Winooski. The data in the draft EIS clearly indicates an increase in noise as the direct result of the change in aircraft. While the Vermont Air National Guard has indicated that they are committed to mitigate the noise, there is no information available on the feasibility of those mitigation measures. **The Winooski City Council opposes any activity that will increase noise in a manner that will have a detrimental effect on our community.** Given the relationship between actual noise and perception of noise on real estate values, the Council wishes to reiterate their position stated in the previously passed resolution (5/21/2012) that **noise impacts must be mitigated to ensure that both DNL contours and maximum noise levels remain at their current state (magnitude and spatial orientation) with F16 operations.**

If such mitigation is not possible, then the Council does not support the bed down of the F35As at Burlington International Airport.

As such, we, the City Council will respond as follows:

The Winooski City Council will take all possible steps to protect our citizens from an increase in noise that will cause harm to our children, elders, refugees, and other compromised residents.

We will fight to protect our way of life. As an urban center, noise is inevitable, but excessive noise that causes long term harm to people, their property, or property value is unacceptable to our community.

We will oppose any efforts to place a large portion of our city in a position to be purchased by the Airport in order to create an empty noise zone.

We will work tirelessly to advocate for the needs of our citizens and business owners, continuing to work with the Vermont Air National Guard, the Burlington International Airport, the Airport Commission, the Mayor of Burlington, the Congressional Delegation, the Governor, the Legislature of the State of Vermont, and any other organization to assure our voices are heard, our citizens protected from harm, and our investments remain strong.

Finally, we formally request that a decision on deployment not be made until the impact of all mitigation efforts are well understood and the City of Winooski is again invited to provide input on the new noise models.

We ask that those individuals who will make F-35A basing decisions and those who may influence that decision continue to work with us to assure that **any** impact of operations at the Airport consider the effect on the City of Winooski. We request that the Vermont Air National Guard reach out to those communities impacted by current as well as future operations and regularly hear concerns in order to continue efforts at noise mitigation already underway.

We recognize that the proposed basing, or any changes in operations – be they military or commercial - at the Burlington Airport will have an impact on our community. We will request formal membership on the Airport Commission so that we may weigh in on decisions long before they are made.

If the decision is made to base the F-35A in our community without addressing our concerns, we ask to have access to funds from the Federal Aviation Administration in order to mitigate the impact from any air operations in order to support improvements in all homes subject to an increase in noise levels in excess of 65dB DNL. And finally, we ask for every effort to be made by the United States Air Force to assist the Vermont Air National Guard in their efforts at noise reduction through operational adjustments.


We in the City of Winooski are proud of our heritage and excited about our future. That will not change. Yet, our City absorbs an extraordinary part of the burden of airport operations with no additional benefit. That cannot continue.

We therefore submit this statement as a representation of the position of our community on the F-35A basing decision. Our efforts begin with this process. We, the Winooski City Council will continue to use due diligence to examine facts as we exercise our responsibility to advocate for the residents of our City.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.


Signed this 18<sup>th</sup> day of June at Winooski, Vermont by:

  
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Mayor Michael R. O'Brien

  
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Deputy Mayor Sally Tipson

  
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Councilor John Little

  
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Councilor Megan Moir

  
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Councilor Sarah Robinson