

**From:** [Jennifer Landesmann](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Subject:** staff report leaves out key parts of the history of the airport, relevant to sustainability concerns  
**Date:** Saturday, March 4, 2023 8:57:12 PM

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Be cautious of opening attachments and clicking on links.**

Dear Council,

Courtesy of the Palo Alto Weekly, and Sky Posse Palo Alto, please see two historical summaries which provide a more complete picture of the airport and are also consistent with each other.

[Summary by Palo Alto Weekly](#)

[Summary on the Sky Posse website on the history of Goddard airport](#)

**The parts that the staff report left out are as follows:**

- The airport was created for Norman A. Goddard, who ran Stanford's Palo Alto School of Aviation. The airport was called Goddard Airport.
- Residents were worried about 3 things: 1) The runway of the Goddard airport was positioned between Escondido Elementary and Paly; 2) Landings had to skim over the roofs located in College Terrace, and 3) noise generation.
- Concurrently - residents petitioned to move the airport *and* got the US Commerce Department to approve the Embarcadero site.
- Stanford didn't want to move the site, so in 1934 residents filed a lawsuit to force the airport to move off Stanford land because of noise.

**Other parts of the airport's history:**

- the current Embarcadero site was originally San Mateo
- in 1954 San Mateo paid \$46,000 for construction of a new runway, the FAA paid \$133,000 for more development
- in 1963 San Mateo County's boundaries changed and PAO then located in Santa Clara County, the county paid thee \$46,000 back to San Mateo

By leaving out the above parts in the staff report, the City staff denies a fundamental concern that residents have had with the airport since it began - noise and the people and children who are affected. In more recent history, in 1983 East Palo Alto incorporated and began to grow. There are now schools and many people affected yet the behaviour of the FAA and aviation folks has been defiant and refuse to consider the people affected by the airport's operations as stakeholders. The ugliest part of PAO's history is how the City of Palo Alto was non-transparent in the transition and plans surrounding the 2014 council actions. I can share from personal experience that 2014 was a year when I had never even heard that Palo Alto had an airport but was made aware of it because of all the SFO mess. As we tried to learn what was going on with SFO's landing patterns, and even met with the city on noise issues, the City had nothing to say to us about PAO. Yet in the dead of Summer, it committed to all sorts of things

that should have had much more public scrutiny and light.

What we have learned since about airport governance is not good. One thing we know is how aviation reports and consultant opinions are not even close to understanding environmental impacts and use flawed or misleading data (especially in 2014 which is before Palo Alto residents uncovered how flawed the FAA's methods are as regards understanding noise). The City itself has taken positions on noise to challenge the FAA which were not even raised in the staff report. Such as the issue of metrics and measurements.

If the City actually cares about sustainability, the word that should stand out is balance. The staff report is instead a one-way megaphone about everything but the real stakeholders, the people of Palo Alto and East Palo Alto. When you have no balance in your basic analysis, everything else is flawed. Interestingly, the SFO Roundtable invokes in each of their meetings that they are on Ohlone land, I suppose to invoke sustainability. PAO is also on Ohlone land, and the people who surround the airport today still care deeply about the human and natural environment. Seems to me that the people who do not have airport interests need to design the information that we want to see about the airport.

Unlike 2014, much more is available to study airports. I encourage you to be curious about the federal laws and policies. For example, while much is said about federal preemption, Foster City did a legal study where it was learned that when an airport and a community agree on certain things to be neighborly, it can supersede federal law. Federal policies are also changing because the assumptions behind the current FAA regulations about airports and communities have been proven to be wrong by the FAA's own scientific studies. You should above all understand what you are signing up for with every single issue on PAO and last but not least prioritize safety. Just last week, in a Nextgen Advisory Committee meeting it was mentioned how the protocols for new entrants are unknown. **When anything is "unknown," you should please not be signing up for it.** Thank you,

Jennifer