

VENICE SUPPORTERS, AOPA WON'T SURRENDER TO CITY PRESSURE

February 25, 2010

“We shall fight on the landing grounds...We shall never surrender” was the call by Sir Winston Churchill in World War II to the British nation, energizing them for the conflicts to come. AOPA saw such a mentality in the minds and efforts of airport supporters in Venice, Fla., in engaging with the Venice Aviation Society, Inc. (VASI) in their struggles with the Venice City Council.

Part of the struggle centers around the runway protection zone for the airport. Venice Municipal Airport is required to have a runway protection zone of a certain size. The problem is that a small swatch of residential areas are located within that zone. Earlier city planning mistakenly allowed housing to be built in the airport's runway clear zone. The current city master plan mistakenly shows a smaller runway protection zone than is required for safety. Recent efforts to update the master plan and redraw the zone to its proper dimensions has plunged the airport into controversy.

The city council started to put pressure onto the airport to reduce the runway size, or to limit the size of aircraft that could land at Venice through changing its airport category designation. Such a reduction would limit the utility of Venice Municipal and decrease the value of the public investment in the airport.

The FAA has repeatedly reminded the city council that they are under federal grant obligations and land-use agreements to keep the airport open and not limit the type of airport operations available. In addition, any formal suggestions by the city to the FAA that include limiting the size or scale of Venice Municipal would have no chance of success.

AOPA met with both sides of the conflict on Feb. 17 and 18. AOPA Manager of Airport Policy John Collins received opinions from both sides in one-on-one meetings and group talks. Collins spoke to approximately ninety members of VASI about getting their [pilot community engaged in aviation](#).

“AOPA will continue to engage in this fight, but local pilots must be aware of what’s going on in their airports and stay active in this effort,” Collins said. “Together we must encourage the city to be good stewards of this great city asset.”

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