

A Motion Regarding Flight Safety at Reagan National Airport

Whereas the Code of Virginia (15.2-2294. Airport safety zoning) states that jurisdictions with airports “shall, by ordinance, provide for the regulation of the height of structures and natural growth for the purpose of protecting the safety of air navigation and the public investment in air navigation facilities” and further states that “an ordinance may be designed and adopted by the locality as an overlay zone superimposed on any preexisting base zone”; and

Whereas the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (§14.5. AIRCRAFT LANDING APPROACH AREA) has in effect delegated this responsibility to the FAA by requiring that “a letter of clearance from the Federal Aviation Agency” (FAA) be submitted for buildings meeting the criteria for an FAA aeronautical review; and

Whereas although airlines are required to meet requirements for safe take-off and climb-out when they are One Engine Inoperative (OEI), the current FAA obstruction criteria evaluate navigation safety only for aircraft operating normally (Part 77 of 14 CFR); and

Whereas the FAA has proposed a policy change to revise its aeronautical reviews of proposed buildings to ensure that planes that lose an engine on take-off or climb-out have a safe departure route; and

Whereas additional tall buildings in Arlington may pose navigation safety hazards to aircraft using Reagan National Airport and may interfere with pilot communications; and

Whereas the FAA has indicated concern that airlines have already reduced their fuel and passenger loads to provide a safe route given existing tall buildings; and

Whereas the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and air carriers using Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport have expressed support for the FAA policy change, citing concern that some proposed buildings in Arlington may threaten the economic viability of the current airport operations by requiring further reductions in fuel and passengers; and

Whereas the Arlington County Manager has notified the FAA that Arlington is concerned that the addition of OEI criteria will impact Arlington's “Smart Growth” plans for Rosslyn and has asked for a formal rule making process (that could take three years or longer); and

Whereas Arlington has begun developing a new Sector Plan for Rosslyn and is approving increased building heights in Crystal City;

Therefore be it resolved that:

- The Arlington County Civic Federation does not agree with the Arlington County Manager's 22 July 2014 letter that asks for a full rule making process, and instead the Federation urges the FAA to adopt its proposed policy change without delay.
- The Arlington County Civic Federation urges the Arlington County Government to work with the FAA and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority to craft an overlay ordinance governing building heights — and in the interim, not to approve any building that impinges on a safe route for OEI aircraft.