



## Hartford Brainard Airport Association, Inc. (HBAA)

is a grass-roots organization of general aviation, private and commercial pilots, business leaders and others dedicated to preserving the airport as a valuable community asset and vital economic resource that supports Connecticut's economy and provides significant benefits to the capital city and region.

**HBAA** works to promote the educational opportunities that already exist at Brainard, encouraging city residents to pursue careers in the fields of aviation and aircraft maintenance.

Click the link below to read the final results of the \$1.5 million, 2023 DECD study on Brainard Airport:

[Complete DECD Study](#)

(Hint: It's massive. Read [Legislative Summary](#) First)

Please visit our web site:

[www.hfdbaa.org/](http://www.hfdbaa.org/)

## We have some good news to report... Brainard Airport stays open!!!

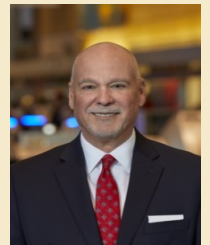


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### Kevin Dillon to Retire from CAA

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## Hartford Brainard Airport HBAA's Vision for the Future of Brainard

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**-eVTOL Aircraft and UAVs Would Take Off Under CAA Bill**  
**-Hartford Mayor Has 'Real Serious Questions' About Repurposing Brainard for Non-Aviation Usage**



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### Op/Ed: Lawmakers need to embrace Brainard for its opportunities

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**Hartford Brainard  
Airport Association**

## **HBAA has some good news to report... Brainard Airport stays open!!!**

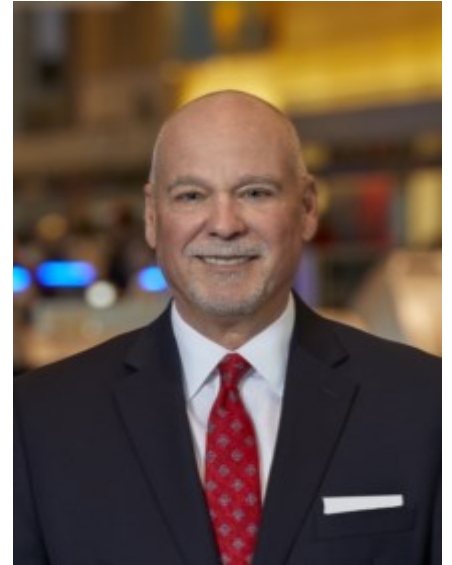
Most everyone in our sizeable general aviation community is aware that there was a [2016 Connecticut General Assembly legislative study](#) to investigate the “best and highest use” of the 201 acre South Meadow property known as the [Hartford Brainard Airport](#). That study unequivocally concluded that the airport should remain open as a general aviation facility. The study further went on to encourage the [Connecticut Airport Authority \(CAA\)](#), which has ownership of Brainard Airport, to grow, develop and promote more general aviation activity to the betterment of both general aviation for the entire Hartford region.

Despite that strongly positive and professionally researched study, calls to close the airport by a very select few state and city legislators continued. Their intention was to repurpose Brainard for non-aviation activity. One particularly focused anti-Brainard legislator led the charge to initiate a second comprehensive airport study to again determine the “best and highest use” of the airport property. The [2023 BFJ Planning Study](#) was completed in the fall of 2023, and *again*, it concluded that Brainard airport should remain open as a general aviation facility. The thoughts of repurposing the property for non-aviation activity such as public housing, retail and commercial activity or even creating a private marina to promote increased boating activity were all summarily rejected. Toxic ground pollution exposure to the public, potential flooding issues next to the river, and proximity to a foul smelling MDC waste treatment plant were a few of the leading reasons to reject repurposing.

Thus, two definitive and comprehensive studies with remarkably similar conclusions. And yet both studies were only professional recommendations and not legislative directives. Neither studies’ conclusions were binding as a legislative action put into law. A formal state mandate voted on in this recent legislative session *could* have directed the CAA to initiate a difficult and very expensive but still possible closure procedure.

The [Hartford Brainard Airport Association](#) is pleased to report to all of our constituents that at the close of the 2024 legislative session which ended at midnight, Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup>, there has been no legislative action whatsoever to close our Brainard Airport. Further and more importantly, there was no extension of a moratorium that would place restrictions on new business activity, building or lease initiation. Bottom line for now is that Brainard can continue as a general aviation facility and develop to its fullest potential.

For the foreseeable future, thanks to support from so many different directions, the battle to save Brainard Airport has been won. The airport can continue to operate and grow with a goal to financially benefit the entire greater Hartford community. Brainard’s airport manager now needs to rise to the occasion and *vigorously* make Brainard something special. There needs to be a renewed focus on growth by promoting aviation education and professional pilot training, getting that restaurant open once again at the airport, increase commercial activity by steering more corporations to Brainard, and build those much needed hangars for a new fleet of corporate jets. The possibilities for making Brainard **GREAT** are endless and long overdue. The time to get moving is now!



## CAA Executive Director Kevin Dillon Announces Retirement

Kevin A. Dillon, A.A.E., [announced](#) on April 9 that he intends to retire as Executive Director of the Connecticut Airport Authority effective January 2025.

“Out of my nearly 50 years in the aviation industry, I have spent the last 12 years leading the Connecticut Airport Authority,” said Dillon. “Together, we have achieved significant milestones for Bradley International Airport. As my tenure with the CAA winds down, I want to thank the CAA Board of Directors and my team for their hard work over the years. I have every confidence that the organization’s success will continue into the future. Leading an organization in this community has been a privilege, and I also want to express my sincere thanks to our local leaders and partners.”

Dillon was appointed Executive Director of CAA in 2012, and he first achieved federal regulatory approval to transition Bradley International Airport and five of the state’s general aviation airports from the Connecticut Department of Transportation to the newly established quasi-public agency later in 2013.

“The CAA is very fortunate to have benefitted from Kevin’s strong leadership since his arrival as the organization’s first executive director in 2012,” said Tony Sheridan, chairman of the CAA Board of Directors.

Prior to his time at the CAA, Dillon worked for the Rhode Island Airport Corporation and Manchester Airport in New Hampshire.



Aside from Bradley Airport, the CAA is also responsible for developing, improving, and operating the state’s 5 General Aviation airports, with the goal of optimizing the economic impact of each one and the cumulative impact of the whole portfolio. We invite you to explore the progress of each of them.

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## Hartford Brainard Airport HBAA's Vision for the Future of Brainard Airport

- \* **Increased hangar space for lease**

Corporate lease opportunities with substantial financial benefit

- \* **Charter Operations**

Significant local market for seasonal flights to the islands and other vacation destinations, including Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, Block Island.

- \* **Aircraft Sales**

Cirrus Aircraft sales is operational on the field. Potential to finalize a northeast distributorship for fully electric Pipistrel Alpha aircraft to Hartford for sales and service

- \* **Fuel Sales**

Increased air traffic promotes increased fuel sales that generate local and state tax revenue.

- \* **Restaurant**

The CAA has approved the establishment of a new restaurant at Brainard which will hopefully open soon. A restaurant draws local residents and pilots and travelers from other cities who spend money locally, generating revenue for businesses and government.

- \* **Improved FBO Facility to attract corporate clientele to Hartford**

To be modeled after FBOs like Signature or TAC Air at Bradley Airport in Windsor Locks.

- \* **Promote educational opportunities and establish pipeline for students to access aviation careers**

Establish formal affiliation with East Hartford, Goodwin University and others for program development with professional pilot training schools and CT Aero Tech at Brainard.

- \* **Hotel / Conference Center / Car Rental**

All possible to promote economic growth for the city without expanding runway size.

- \* **Museum**

Promote attractions that emphasize the remarkable history of the 101-year-old facility.

- \* **Promote shipping relationships with local businesses in "Aerospace Alley" that partner with the General Aviation Industry**

Brainard and its vicinity have the potential for a significant industrial park for Connecticut manufacturers and suppliers, which are vital to the nation's aviation industry.

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## eVTOL Aircraft and UAVs Would Take Off Under CAA Bill

A legislative proposal from the Connecticut Airport Authority that seeks to prepare the state for the future of aviation was adopted on May 7th.

[House Bill 5330](#) would incorporate vertiports into the state's regulatory framework to accommodate operations from vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) and electric VTOL aircraft. The aircraft, according to [testimony](#) in support of the bill from CAA executive director Kevin Dillon, would "make possible the burgeoning concept of advanced air mobility (AAM), which envisions the movement of passengers and cargo between areas that are not currently served easily by existing transportation modes."



The new technology requires FAA certification but is expected to become mainstream in the coming years and Connecticut should prepare for it, he said. "Despite the fact that VTOL and eVTOL aircraft are still in the testing phase, vertiports are already being constructed in other states in anticipation of this new technology. Connecticut must be prepared and incorporate vertiports into the existing statutes to ensure that such developments are coordinated."

Additionally, the bill incorporates safety practices related to operation of unmanned aircraft, or drones. The bill allows CAA to establish procedures regarding the takeoff and landing of unmanned aircraft, as well as other aspects of drone operations that are not preempted by federal law.

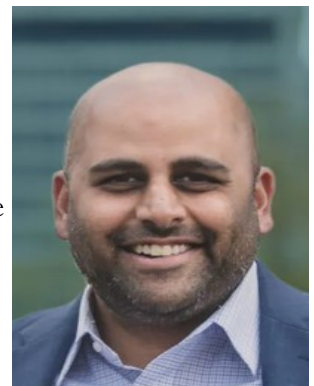
Lastly, the original bill prohibits intentionally projecting a laser on or at an aircraft or the flight path of an aircraft, in order to deter the dangerous activity. Laser strikes are a significant problem across the country, according to CAA's comments, and they pose a threat to pilots if they reach the cockpit. In 2023, there were 13,304 laser strikes reported to the FAA nationwide.

## Hartford Mayor Has 'Real Serious Questions' About Repurposing Brainard for Non-Aviation Usage

While new Hartford Mayor Arunan Arulampalam hasn't formally taken a position on the future of Brainard Airport, he indicated recently that any development or repurposing of the facility would concern him.

"It's a really significant decision and shouldn't be made hastily," Arulampalam told the *Hartford Courant* recently. "I always support further development of properties that we have here in Hartford. But I have real serious questions about the viability of development on the Brainard parcel" in the South Meadows area of the capital city.

Mayor Arulampalam, who served previously as Chief Executive Officer of Hartford Land Bank, which identifies and rehabilitates distressed properties, was responding to the findings of the 2023 [Brainard Airport study](#) consultant that the site could be used for industrial or mixed-use redevelopment. As HBAA has argued, any such redevelopment would cost tens of millions of dollars to remediate environmental contamination and take years to decommission it due to FAA and other obligations before realizing any property tax or economic development potential.



**Hartford Mayor  
Arunan Arulampalam**

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The following editorial comment appeared in the **Hartford Courant** on April 12, 2024:

## Opinion: Lawmakers need to embrace Brainard for its opportunities

By [ROBERT HAM](#)

April 12, 2024 at 5:22 a.m.



Current jobs and training at Brainard are part of the state's aviation eco-system

A recent [2023 BFJ Planning Study](#) has concluded Hartford-Brainard Airport's best use is as an airport; a [2016 Legislative Programs Review and Investigations Committee](#) study reached the same conclusion. These taxpayers paid studies show the need to craft a forward-looking strategic plan for Brainard Airport as a community aviation resource.

Public hearings about Brainard had little serious discussion about existing businesses, the jobs and tax revenues they generate, and opportunities for growth. Also absent has been an exploration of the many educational opportunities Brainard provides.

Training and jobs related to pilots as well as mechanics and avionics technicians on site are part of the aviation jobs sector that is part of Connecticut's industrial core. Civil Air Patrol (CAP) maintains a volunteer squadron, which conducts pilot training and proficiency. CAP also teaches young members ground support techniques such as search and rescue. Life skills provided by CAP are in demand for area high school students.

A strategic plan would not only support the existing businesses, which employ more than 250 people; it would capitalize on the limitless potential of the facility. Without such a plan, Brainard will continue to languish as potential investors stand back while lawmakers endlessly debate its future.

The 2023 study concluded that non-aviation redevelopment would require costly ground remediation that could take decades, providing zero training, jobs or tax revenues while being done. Flood dikes which prevent seasonal flooding and proximity to an active sewerage treatment plant further limit the development options. Gov. Ned Lamont correctly boasts that aviation is a pillar of Connecticut's economy. Current jobs and training at Brainard are part of the state's aviation eco-system that will flourish if the politicians set their sights on developing a blueprint for investment and growth of the industry already there.

Lawmakers need to embrace Brainard for its opportunities to foster imagination and excitement among our youth, create additional high paying jobs, generate taxes, and serve as a pipeline to countless other aviation businesses and companies based in Connecticut and the region.

*Robert Ham is an active pilot from Oxford Airport and a strong supporter of the growth and development of all general aviation services. He lives in Cheshire. (This editorial opinion is reprinted with permission of the author. The HBAA Board shares Mr. Ham's well-stated opinion.)*

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