

HARTFORD BRAINARD AIRPORT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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Click the link below to follow the \$1.5 million DECD study on the BFJ website as it progresses:

[BFJ Study](#)

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.

What lies beneath the “Umbrella of Uncertainty” that presently clouds Brainard Airport’s future?

Opinion By Michael B. Teiger, MD, President
Hartford Brainard Airport Association, Inc.

Public information session #5 for the [BFJ Planning Study](#) regarding the fate of [Brainard Airport](#) ended in the evening, August 13th in a very unsatisfying way. Most of the attendees were Brainard airport supporters and their disappointment with the lack of more substantive information regarding the economics of closure, specific land contamination data, or realistic building options in view of the recent flooding was palpable.

BFJ claimed that any finding released must first be cleared with the study's oversight body, Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) and with the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP). A draft report, again not for public disclosure, will be completed by the end of August. However, a final report to be made public for review will not be available until October. Those are BFJ's directives from the DECD. Fair enough.

After all these months of study, however, there is a *glaring* deficiency that really left us all a bit troubled. It was surprisingly disappointing to learn that BFJ has as of yet failed to investigate, in any detail, the future plans of [Hartford Jet Center](#) owner Lindsey Rutka, or his substantial roadblocks to development over the past several years because of closure uncertainty. It was also shocking to learn that BFJ has failed to interview Barry Alexander, CEO of [Aquiline Drones](#), the Rowleys of [VIP Avionics](#), Mr. Neligon of [Total Aircraft Parts](#), Senior AME [Dr. Robert Dodenhoff](#) whose medical office is at midfield, Phil Smith of [Learn2Fly](#) flight school or any of the other flight school owners about their present contribution to the economic activity of Brainard. These leading business people are on the field, and have significant economic activity that supports the airport, the general aviation community, the city and the region. All owners had been available to share informed economic data. The pushback by one of BFJ's managers that they surveyed only a list provided by CAA is hardly an adequate excuse. Thoroughly surveying and documenting *present* business activity **in detail** is **absolutely essential** and should have been BFJ's step number one.

Several strong recommendations exist for what *could* be done to make Brainard much more valuable. It is quite curious as to why BFJ has not diligently reached out further to specific local pilots and other business users of the airport, beyond a very abbreviated questionnaire so they could gather all possible information regarding Brainard's present activity and future potential. HBAA, a grass roots organization representing pilots and business users also took exception that they were not contacted directly for comment either.

The stated purpose of BFJ's intervention in the first place was to assess the “best and highest use” for the South Meadow property. Taking aside the alternative usage possibilities, such as mixed use, shopping, residential or warehouse development, the proper answer to the question **REQUIRES** a complete understanding of what goes on at Brainard **today**. It also **REQUIRES** a complete understanding of what will happen to the airport in the near future should the “umbrella of uncertainty” regarding closure be lifted and Brainard be allowed to develop to its fullest potential as a vibrant center for general aviation in the Northeast.

The question of whether or not to close Brainard is very complex, and anyone familiar with the property knows that its environmental, socioeconomic, and political issues interact heavily. Brainard is clearly an important, aviation oriented facility, well positioned to benefit from the explosion of new and exciting aviation technology. The effort to close, championed by a very few Hartford politicians with unclear motivations has been a very contentious issue in Hartford politics and is a prominent campaign issue for the upcoming Hartford mayoral race.

Our state legislators need and should expect clear, complete, and unbiased data to come out of the present BFJ study that is relevant for our specific airport in order for them to make the best decisions. Clearly, the scope of the study is vast, indeed, and BFJ is commended for their efforts in gathering as much information as they have. However, present observations suggest that BFJ must extend themselves much further than they have to date. They must thoroughly accumulate and document the present vibrant business and commercial activity as well as clearly outline the bright future Brainard will have if allowed to flourish. A failure to do so will cast an “umbrella of doubt” as to the validity of BFJ's study, no matter what their final conclusions might be.

Please consider a donation to support HBAA's efforts to keep Brainard Airport open:



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New Study Shows General Aviation's Economic Impact On U.S. States [©]

A recent article in [Aviation Week Network](#), published on June 20, 2023 by Molly McMillin nicely summarized the plight that general Aviation (GA) airports face today. The article clearly articulates all the positive information that pro-aviation advocates have been trying to convey to the greater Hartford community about the benefits Brainard Airport, one of many GA airports under threat in the US today.

McMillin writes, "The general aviation industry has been under attack...with a lot of misconceptions." She goes on to state, "Now more than ever, it is important to raise awareness about the importance of general aviation and general aviation airports and the economic impact on communities across the country."

There is no lack of data on the subject. Even the most basic Google search will reveal dozens of current articles regarding the economic benefit of general aviation airports. "We can certainly pick out an example here and there of a wealthy flyer, but there are hundreds and thousands of businesses and charitable organizations and farms and local communities and flight schools that depend on general aviation and our network of GA airports every day, not to mention critical services, such as disaster relief, medical care and many other efforts."

To state only one of McMillin's many statistics, general aviation supports more than 1.1 million jobs and more than \$246 billion in economic impact a year in America. With all the current economic data available for review, there is no excuse for our Hartford politicians to claim that Brainard has no potential economic benefit for our region **IF** it is allowed to develop to its fullest potential.

HBAA assumes that the BFJ Planning Group needs no encouragement to avail themselves of economic data that is readily available as it pertains to Brainard's role with regard to the "best and highest use" for the airport property. HBAA encourages all politicians, including our mayoral candidates and state legislators, to educate themselves so that we can both protect and optimize the airport to reach its highest potential as a truly exciting economic asset for our city, our state and the entire New England region.

References:

[Aviation Week—New Study Shows General Aviation's Economic Impact On U.S. States](#)

[Price Waterhouse - Contribution of General Aviation to the US Economy in 2018](#)

[FAA - The Economic Impact of U.S. Civil Aviation: 2020](#)

[AOPA - Economic Impact of General Aviation Airports](#)



Hartford Mayoral Candidate Coleman Supports Brainard

Former state senator and retired Superior Court Judge Eric Coleman, who is now running as a petitioning Democratic candidate for mayor of the city of Hartford, recently expressed his formal support for keeping Brainard Airport open and expanding its operations.

In a wide-ranging [interview in the Hartford Business Journal](#), Coleman noted that every study of the airport prior to the current DECD analysis being conducted by BFJ Planning has concluded that it should continue as an airport and he "tend[s] to agree with that conclusion."

"I think what is probably important is to make an effort to enhance the operations of Brainard Airport, with the emphasis on the training opportunities that exist, including the jet engine mechanic and pilot training. I think there still is a need for hotel and motel space there."

Judge Coleman, who is seeking to replace Mayor Luke Bronin, who is not seeking re-election and has pushed for closure of the airport to make way for future development, also noted potential opportunities at Brainard for flight excursions to hard-to-reach destinations such as Martha's Vineyard or Cape Cod.

Additionally, he highlighted the significant potential costs of environmental remediation. "No one seems to be taking into consideration the cost of remediating the grounds that would permit housing development or any kind of retail development, should the airport close."

Not all Hartford mayoral candidates have given their official support for keeping Brainard open or understand its great potential for educational and economic growth for the region. Candidate J. Stan McCauley has clearly declared his support for Brainard while state senator John Fonfara has long indicated his position that the Brainard site be used for purposes other than aviation. The Hartford Democratic Town Committee has endorsed Attorney Arunan Arulampalam, who says he is carefully studying the benefits of Brainard's future but has not yet committed to a position for or against. All leading candidates, but one, have accepted **HBAA's** invitation to tour the airport and discuss present activities and the future potential for future general aviation growth.

The primary, when Democrats will choose their party's candidate, is Sept. 12; Election Day is Nov. 7. **HBAA** remains committed to host tours and educate all mayoral candidates and state legislators about Brainard's activities today and what the exciting future holds for general aviation facilities like our Hartford Brainard Airport.



Judge Eric Coleman

Visit our Web site:
www.hfdbaa.org

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