

February 2018 Column

It's time again to bring you up to date on our opposition to the proposed Post Oak Dump and its permit application at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and before the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH). The TCEQ is supposed to protect the health and prosperity of the citizens of Texas – and they are doing just the opposite. Money talks.

Last year we were able to delay the process at the TCEQ Commission permit hearing, and the case was remanded back to SOAH. The administrative court process is now underway, and we will probably be back before the TCEQ Commission sometime around mid-year. While we believe we have definitively proved that the application is not compliant with TCEQ rules, the applicant has been allowed unprecedented permission to correct application errors. Instead of doing the right thing and rejecting the application, the TCEQ gave the applicant yet another opportunity to fix things with the application. By the way, much of the money for this permit application is from our "friend" Red McCombs. And I plead once again...Say it ain't so, Red!

Apart from the health and economic threats to Seguin posed by this dump, another issue has become prominent in our struggle against it – bird strike hazards. Yes, bird strikes. New residents in the area may not know that we have an Air Force Auxiliary Airfield located just east of town. During the week, T-38 jets fly constant touch-and-go missions in and out of that airfield. It is a critical part of Joint Base Randolph's 12th Flying Wing training program.

It just so happens that the Post Oak dump is in the flight path of the jets using our auxiliary airfield. Dumps attract birds, lots of birds. Most of these birds tend to be vultures. The jets would be approaching the field at speed and be at an altitude of around 1,000 to 2,000 feet, which is vulture cruising altitude. T-38 engines don't digest vultures very well, so you can imagine the threat this dump poses. The lives of pilots and citizens on the ground would be put in jeopardy, not to mention the destruction of the planes and private property. Evidence has been submitted to the SOAH court to prove that this bird strike hazard exists and may threaten the Randolph Mission.

Last week, Sen. Donna Campbell held a Veteran's Affairs and Border Security Committee meeting at Port San Antonio. One of the charges of the committee was to identify opportunities to promote the strategic importance of military installations in Texas, and to bolster the vitality of military installations and their communities. I testified at the hearing, explained the bird strike hazards, and urged the committee to support us in opposition to the dump. Randolph Field is being encroached on all sides by development. It's Mission is endangered when the Air Force cannot perform the necessary maneuvers required to train their pilots in that area. Randolph is vital and must be protected, including from any future Base Realignment And Closure (BRAC) congressional hearings.

Plainly stated, if bird strikes occur or become more likely, and this causes the auxiliary airfield in Seguin to close, the training mission at Randolph could go away along with Randolph's reason to exist. This would destroy a vital national security asset along with a big chunk of the economy in Bexar, Guadalupe and surrounding counties.

Gee, do you think any of those thousands of folks who may lose their jobs would stop buying cars?

Gosh I love this town!