

Airport Authority Will Brief Bowman Field Neighbors on New FAA Rules, Possible Tree Removal

by Erica Peterson on December 19, 2011

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New federal regulations may lead to the removal of some mature trees on private property near Bowman Field. The Louisville Regional Airport Authority will hold the first of two meetings tonight to provide information to homeowners.

Bowman Field is bordered by neighborhoods like Kingsley, Hawthorne and Seneca Gardens—older neighborhoods, with older trees. But new rules from the Federal Aviation Administration mean some homeowners may have to allow the airport authority to trim or remove the trees to comply.

The airport authority sent letters to 500 homeowners earlier this month, telling them they might be affected. Spokeswoman Trish Burke says the authority won't know for awhile which trees will be affected, because it depends on their height and proximity to the field. The trees will be replaced with smaller ornamental varieties.

Burke says there's no leeway in the Federal Aviation Authority's regulations, and any trees that are in violation will have to be trimmed or removed. But she says that should be the only inconvenience to neighbors.

"They should not notice any change in operation at Bowman Field," she said. "The aircraft fleet mix using it won't change. Aircraft flying overhead, they won't fly lower than before. These standards are just to give an extra cushion of safety."

The news was greeted with dismay by the airport's neighbors. Phyllis Hawkins lives in Kingsley, and has two bald cypresses that will eventually grow to 75 feet tall.

"I'm worried about the environment, air pollution, noise pollution, the decrease in the storm runoff water from the trees, all sorts of things," she said.

Hawkins is a former member of the Kingsley Tree Board, which worked to replace the neighborhood's older canopy trees that were succumbing to storms and disease. She says it's ironic that some of those may need to be removed.

Work likely won't begin on tree removal until late next fall. The authority will hold the first of two workshops to answer questions about the process tonight from 5:30 to 8:30 at the Bowman Field Administration Building.

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