

## Lori Olberg

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**From:** Peter Cook <Pcook@firstchurchburlington.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 14, 2013 8:43 PM  
**To:** Lori Olberg  
**Subject:** Message from Contact Us at [www.BurlingtonVT.gov](http://www.BurlingtonVT.gov)

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Comment/Question: August 14, 2013 Dear Members of the Burlington City Council: My name is Peter Cook and I write in opposition to the F35 bed down at Burlington International Airport. I am a recent homeowner in Burlington who lives at 28 Prospect Hill. My home is not far from the proposed flight path for the F35 in Winooski. I also write as the Senior Minister of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in Burlington. As pastor of this church, I don't speak for everyone in my congregation. I do feel, however, that I have a pastoral duty to raise hard questions and lift up my voice against proposals or developments which may pose significant economic, environmental, and health struggles for people in my church and our community as a whole. I have tried to have an open mind by listening to both sides. It is important to me that I listen to all the arguments and facts. After reading and listening for awhile now, I have concluded that the proposed benefits of basing the F35 at the Burlington airport have not been sufficiently substantiated by its proponents and, therefore, the F35 is not worthy of my support. Indeed, the Air Force's own Revised Environmental Impact Report serves to undermine the proponent's main arguments in favor of the plane. Proponents claim that the sound which emanates from the F35 will be approximately the same as the F16. They also claim that the sound can be mitigated. And yet the Air Force's Revised Environmental Impact Report shows that the noise cannot be mitigated and will be four times louder than the F16. The issue of noise is central to the argument against the F35 because the vast increase in noise will have multiple adverse effects. Because of the increase in noise, up to 4,000 additional homes in Winooski, South Burlington and Burlington could be rendered unfit for residential use. This designation could result in a decline in property value and, therefore, put some properties at risk of foreclosure. Moreover, many of these homes will be impossible to resell at a fair price because of the unfit designation. It is also very unclear whether those homes in the direct flight path and crash zone would be eligible for compensation and, moreover, whether that compensation would be anywhere near sufficient to cover the real cost of the loss of value and relocation. If compensation were forthcoming, however, it would not be offered to homeowners who are affected but who narrowly miss living in the residential zone for homeowners that may be eligible for compensation. Indeed, I worry about the value of my own recently purchased home which is not directly in the proposed flight path but is in close proximity. Far too many of people in the affected area already have a precarious financial situation and can scarcely afford more financial risk. It is very unjust that the burden of F35 basing be carried by those least able to afford it. I question whether there is a comprehensive economic plan which includes the basing of the F35 in its analysis. As far as I know, the proponents of the F35 to date have not offered any concrete economic and job plan for the region, that takes into account the F35 basing, which can be analyzed and debated, beyond preservation of the Vermont National Guard. If demolition of homes and buy back programs are part of the plan for commercial development and job creation, then we need to see a whole lot more detail before the public can be asked to support F35 basing. What has been the track record to date on buy back programs as it relates to economic development in region so far? Did it work that well? Why would things be any better with the basing of the F35 if this particular strategy has not really worked to date? While a few businesses may benefit, and it's hard to see really which ones would without a lot more specific information, it seems many more businesses would be adversely affected including the residential real estate, home mortgage and tourism industries. Frankly, the benefits of airport expansion

through basing of military planes, based on experience in other cities, can sometimes be vastly overstated and even have an adverse affect. What can we learn from other city's experiences in this area before supporting this basing and how does that experience compare to our situation? Can't we shape a viable economic plan that does not rely on F35 basing? Proponents claim that the F35 is a better aircraft than the F16. It is my understanding that the F16 is, in fact, a better plane for military operations and is vastly cheaper than the F35. It is also my understanding that the Air Force has identified many design flaws in the F35 which cannot be resolved which is why they have decided to retrofit the entire fleet of F16s. Given the design flaws of the F35, I am concerned about the safety of basing the F35 in this densely populated area given the much higher propensity of this aircraft to crash than the F16. A crash of an untested plane in our densely populated area would be a great tragedy on so many levels. I am one who has respect for what our military does in this country and, more specifically, the Vermont Air National Guard. But supporting the military and Guard does not absolve us as strong patriots, citizens, people of faith, and tax payers from asking critical questions about the best use of tax payer resources to mount a strong defense in the 21st century. We also have the duty to ask whether proposed weapons systems will divert far too much money away from military personnel, government employees, economic and business development, and the vast number of Americans who benefit from government programs. One claim made is that the Guard will go out of business if we don't get the F35. Since it seems clear the F16 will continue to be used indefinitely, there is no prospect the Guard will go out of business. No such claim is made by the Air Force itself. The Guard's future also might be even more secure if it considers adopting additional missions to mount a defense including, for instance, programs to prevent cyber warfare which poses to us a greater threat and cannot be addressed with fighter planes of any kind. Such an initiative might also garner wider support from the business community. Finally, as the landlord of the airport, Burlington could have significant legal exposure for basing the F35 if they knowingly ignore the risks and costs of the plane and support the basing of the plane anyway. Thank you for your consideration. My thoughts and prayers are with you as you deliberate on this important matter and trust you will arrive at a decision which will protect residents in Burlington, Winooski, South Burlington and the surrounding region from harm. Sincerely, Peter Cook Senior Minister