



RAPID CITY REGIONAL AIRPORT

www.rapairport.org

January 26, 2015

Chairman, City Legal and Finance Committee

The Rapid City Regional Airport Board, a Board appointed by the Rapid City Mayor and confirmed by the Rapid City Council, opposes the proposed ordinance regarding the Rapid City Regional Airport and the Rapid City Fire Department. The Rapid City Regional Airport has received quality service from the Rapid City Fire Department for over 40 years and the Board is not proposing any change.

The principal responsibility of the Rapid City Regional Airport Board is to ensure an efficient, safe and cost effective airport to best serve the over one- half million passengers who pass through the Rapid City Regional Airport annually. With that in mind, the Board sought to gain efficiencies last spring with regard to firefighting services in terms of cost, duty assignments and personnel selection.

As part of the process, the Board contacted several private firefighting firms who provide firefighting services to other airports and asked for cost estimates and contract terms for purposes of comparison. Two firms responded and provided important information regarding cost, duties and assignment of firefighters. The Board used that information to work with the Rapid City Fire Department, the City Attorney, the Mayor and the Rapid City Regional Airport Staff to formulate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that addresses and reduces costs for firefighting services, expands the tasks firefighters will perform to support the airport and gives the airport limited say regarding assignment and promotion of firefighters within the existing structure (ie. city policies, union contracts, etc...) without compromising safety in any way. That MOU has taken much longer than we would like, but it is now near final. I feel strongly that the Airport Board will approve the MOU after final changes have been made.

The Memorandum of Understanding is the product of all parties coming to the table and reaching a compromise. That process makes an ordinance unnecessary. It is also worth noting the Federal Aviation Administration Official for our region commented that he knew of no other city in the region that had resorted to enacting an ordinance like the one being considered by Rapid City. As a matter of fact, if the Rapid City ordinance had been in place, I believe it would have dis-incentivized the Rapid City Fire Department to work on an MOU. As it turns out, through the process of getting information on firefighting costs from private contractors, the Rapid City Regional Airport Board was able to get a better deal for the traveling public and will be providing better services in a world class facility at a lower cost with the same level of safety as in the past; just exactly what the Airport Board is supposed to do!

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Finally, I am proud to be associated with the Rapid City Regional Airport. As I have pointed out, I believe it is a world class Airport with a highly qualified staff. The Rapid City Regional Airport has received superior marks from any and all inspections and visits from outside agencies and individuals. And I applaud my fellow Board Members for their leadership in challenging the status quo and continually seeking improvement. I strongly believe the Board is acting today to sustain the current level of excellence which is the foundation for an even brighter future!



Ray Carpenter

President

Rapid City Regional Airport Board