



Fire Department

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Mayor Sam Kooiker
Members of the Rapid City Common Council
300 6th Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

Dear Mayor Kooiker and Members of the Council:

It is with great concern that I write this letter about the issue of fire protection at the Rapid City Regional Airport. To hear that the Rapid City Fire Department's (RCFD's) long-term fire protection relationship with the Rapid City Regional Airport is in jeopardy is almost unbelievable. I cannot imagine a scenario in which a private contractor would provide a better and more comprehensive service to the airport than the RCFD. The RCFD's commitment to the airport and the citizens the airport serves is second to none.

During my 32-year tenure in the fire service I have been involved in the fire protection at airports in each city in which I have had the pleasure to work. My experiences overwhelmingly prove the best service for airport and aircraft fire protection is delivered by the municipal fire departments located in those cities. The privatization of the Airport Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) function at the airport would be a mistake! The RCFD not only offers the staffing and expertise required to meet and exceed the requirements of the FAA Part-139, but provides a full range of other fire and emergency protection services to the airport that a private provider will NOT be able to provide. These include:

- Incident command and management
- Structure fire and alarm response
- Advanced emergency medical services and transport
- Public education
- Fire inspections risk identification and reduction
- Wild land fire response
- Special operations including technical rescue and hazardous materials response
- Administration/management of employees
- Agreements and relationships with secondary agencies
- ESCC-911 Center
- City/County Emergency Management

These emergency and non-emergency services provided by the RCFD add a value to the airport and the citizens of the community beyond basic ARFF services.

Furthermore, I strongly support and urge each of you to support proposed Ordinance 6029, codifying the providing of ARFF services by the RCFD to the airport, solidifying the relationship between them. The ordinance is long overdue and provides an excellent framework for continued success of the airport / RCFD relationship and more importantly ensures the safety of the Rapid City citizens. There is no question that the RCFD has provided exemplary service at the airport. Discontinuing the service and the relationship would be a bad business decision as well as underscore the point that government does not recognize and reward excellence.

The ordinance will provide the necessary policy foundation for the current MOU that is under discussion. An updated "living" MOU between the RCFD and the regional airport which operationalizes the minimum services, and clarifies performance measures, expectations, and responsibilities placed on the fire department by the airport is necessary and an important step forward for the lasting success of the cooperative arrangement. The MOU format is a great way to outline these day-to-day details; it is a mechanism that can be reviewed and changed as needed by agreement between the Fire Chief and Airport Director.

The RCFD has provided outstanding service to the Rapid City Regional Airport since 1968. The administration, the department, and specifically the trained ARFF rescue firefighters are committed to providing the airport with a service that does not only meet the minimum ARFF requirements, but exceeds them. **I ask you to please recognize the value of your fire department and all the services they provide the regional airport and vote for Ordinance 6029 to codify this important relationship.**

Sincerely,


MARK ROHLFING
Chief

MR/cf