

Dear Mayor Allender and members of the Rapid City Council and Citizens:

As a business owner and former broadcast journalist, I am disappointed to see and hear the lengths and depths our Rapid City officials and leaders are willing to go to justify an end.

One-party recordings are legal in South Dakota but they are not always ethical. Secret recordings by City officials, leaders and their appointees are offensive to fairness standards that the City promises to all our citizens. The recent secret recordings encouraged or acknowledged by City Hall of a Rapid City business owner and the secret recording of an employee of that business who also serves on the Common Council appears to be underhanded, deceptive and an attempt to ambush and discredit.

This is an unfortunate example of how City leaders can abuse power, manipulate and secretly “get the goods” to achieve an agenda. What is the agenda in this case? Is it to negotiate a more favorable lease for the city? Is it to remove and replace a tenant? Is it to force a City Councilwoman to lose her job and or position on the City Council? If it is to negotiate a more favorable lease or achieve an equitable agreement, alleged “gotcha” quotes from secret recordings serve no constructive purpose except to discredit and squash free flow communication.

As a broadcast journalist for 28 years my interviewees always knew when they were being recorded. I always said “I have a tape running” or “May I record you”? It’s professional, ethical and there is never a question the conversation is for public consumption.

Community leaders and officials should at least abide by the same standards as Journalists and attorneys. Secret tape recordings in South Dakota may be legal but this one smacks of trickery especially when it is made public for the apparent purpose of embarrassment and humiliation.

This “Tape-gate” sets up the next step – a hearing to censure or remove a member of the City Council . Looking back on the history of Rapid City Council Censure hearings, and after viewing today’s News Conferences, the fate of the accused has already been determined.

It’s difficult these days to convince good people to “get involved” in the community and city to try to do good works. it’s even more difficult when leaders choose unsavory tactics and secrecy over professional conduct.

Sincerely,

Debra Jensen

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