



CITY OF RAPID CITY

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA 57701-2724

Office of the Mayor

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January 28, 2020

WestJet Air Center
4190 WestJet Drive
Rapid City, SD 57703

Dear Don and Linda Rydstrom:

I have concluded my assessment of the reported threat against Lisa Modrick by Airport Board President Darren Harr.

Obviously, there have been difficulties between the airport and WestJet for a period of years. In the past four years, WestJet complaints against the airport have been increasingly personal in nature and directed specifically at Airport Director Patrick Dame. I believe the documents on file including complaints to the FAA better articulate this point.

Recently, WestJet hired City Councilwoman Lisa Modrick to be their operations director. Since that time, myself and several councilmembers have been fielding inquiries and concerns from citizens about the apparent conflict of interest given the history. The primary concern being: the years-long conflict between the airport and WestJet; the obvious allegiance of Lisa Modrick to WestJet Air Center; and Lisa Modrick's position as a sitting City Council member. Mrs. Modrick dismisses this alleged conflict as being no different than any other council member having a job. I believe the complaint against Darren Harr has proven to be a tipping point as to whether this conflict of interest is perception or reality.

On January 6, 2020 Mrs. Modrick, a management employee of WestJet Air Center, made a formal complaint against Airport Board President Darren Harr. The complaint stemmed from a meeting between Harr and Modrick on December 10, 2019. Serious allegations were made in the filing of the complaint. Furthermore, in the meeting when the complaint was made, WestJet owner Linda Rydstrom indicated this was the most serious complaint ever made against WestJet Air Center. She added that she had spoken to federal officials from the TSA and possibly other organizations who indicated that this was, in fact, "a threat against civil aviation." That was prior to the revelation that the December 10 meeting between Modrick and Harr had been recorded.



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

After listening to the recording of the December 10 meeting and conducting a comparative analysis between the allegations made and the actual content of the conversation, it is my determination that the complaint made by Mrs. Modrick does not, in anyway resemble the content, tone or context of the meeting. I am confident using the reasonable person standard, anyone listening to the audio recording and comparing it to the allegations would conclude the complaint was an out-right fabrication. In summary, what initially appeared to be a complaint against one individual by another, now seems more likely was merely another attack by WestJet against the Rapid City Regional Airport.

I believe it's commonly understood that public agencies such as the City of Rapid City are expected to withstand more scrutiny and criticism than a typical private business. Over the last four years, I believe the City has endured enough criticism, especially where a pattern of false or questionable complaints has been established.

No longer will I stand by while the airport and its officers endure these vicious and personal attacks on their character and integrity.

Unless there is a change in cooperation or some assurance this type of behavior will not continue into the future, the City will be forced to take any and all actions necessary to protect its employees, volunteers and its airport from the threat posed by WestJet.

If you wish to respond or arrange a meeting regarding this or other issues, please do so through legal counsel.


Steve Allender
Mayor

Cc. Rapid City Common Council