



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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March 15, 2005

Ms. Woody Woodward
Associate Administrator for Airports
Federal Aviation Administration
ARP-1
800 Independence Ave. S.W.
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Woody:

I am writing you to enlist your assistance and support in preserving a vital general aviation airport in Southern California – Rialto Municipal Airport.

As you and your staff know, the City of Rialto, California, sponsor of the Rialto Municipal Airport has undertaken a “Municipal Airport Asset Strategy” study in order to determine what they will ultimately do with the airport. The 435 acre Rialto Airport is included in the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) and since 1984 has accepted over \$15 million in federal aid-over half of which was for airport land acquisition. Additionally, the airport is home base to the San Bernardino County sheriff’s Aero Squadron as well as a major Air Ambulance company.

The City’s study identified three preferred alternative scenarios that should be studied further. The three alternatives are:

- Close the airport
- Downsize the airport
- Relocate the airport

The “relocate the airport” is really a misnomer. In reading the study, “relocate” refers to the businesses and tenants of the airport; move them then close the airport and develop the property for other than airport purposes. During my January 2005 visit to Rialto, I learned in meetings with pilots at the airport that the city is already attempting to entice airport businesses with financial incentives and lease promises to move to San Bernardino International Airport, formerly a U.S. military airport located nine miles east of Rialto.

In October 2002, the FAA Western Pacific Region Airports Division staff notified the City of Rialto that they were in non-compliance with federal grant obligations for numerous reasons including use of airport property for non-aviation purposes, lack of maintenance, contract compliance deficiencies and use of airport revenues. The City did

Ms. Woody Woodward
Page 2
March 15, 2005

not respond to the notice. On November 2002, the Region again contacted the city outlining additional non-compliance issues requiring remedial actions. In December 2004, the Western Region notified the City of additional compliance issues relating to non-aviation uses of airport property (drag racing and placement of concrete barriers on airport property) as well as the agency's concern regarding the Asset Strategy study. To our knowledge, the City did not respond to any of these letters. For your convenience, I am enclosing copies of these letters.

We believe the City continues to show a consistent pattern of blatant disregard for both federal and state laws.

On January 28, 2005, AOPA filed a California Public Records Act request as authorized under California state laws. The state law defines very specific statutory time limits for responding to these requests. The City Attorney notified us on January 28, 2005 that we would be provided with a number of the documents we had requested within "about" two-weeks. It's now six weeks later and Rialto has not yet provided AOPA with the documents we requested. AOPA's next course of action may very well be the filing of an action in State Court to compel the City to respond to our request.

While in Rialto, I visited with a number of AOPA members based at the airport. Aircraft owners and pilots that I visited with made it very clear that they are extremely concerned about their airport's future. They also indicated they are being pressured by City staff to not oppose the City's efforts to close the airport. I also toured the airport and was appalled to see how much of the airport is being used for non-aviation purposes. Aircraft hangars are being used for motor vehicle repairs; part of the terminal building – prime airport real estate – is a flower shop. Local pilots told me that over 75% of developed airport hangars are being used for non-aviation purposes with an airport taxiway being used for drag racing. Much of this I saw first hand.

The City claims they cannot afford to operate the airport. Yet time and time again, I heard from speakers during the public hearing that had submitted proposals to the City for aviation businesses at the airport only to be denied by the City.

We believe the City is working diligently to create a self-fulfilling prophecy for the airport's failure. We believe the proposed airport closure and redevelopment of airport property for other purposes is being driven by local real estate developers who see the soon to be completed Highway 210 bypass (which runs directly north of airport property) as significantly increasing the value of airport land benefiting local developers.

Woody, rest assured that AOPA is going to continue to defend the continued viability of this key reliever airport. We will battle this proposed airport closure all the way.

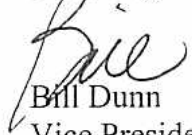
Ms. Woody Woodward
Page 3
March 15, 2005

Since the City of Rialto has failed to respond to all the agency's letters and notices of non-compliance, we are asking the FAA, from your office, to more fully engage the City in stopping their efforts to close Rialto Airport. The Region has tried with little success.

In the past, we have been strong partners working collaboratively to maintain the viability of key general aviation airports. We appreciate the agency's past efforts and know we can count on the FAA to continue to exercise its responsibilities and support of GA airports.

Please feel free to call me to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,



Bill Dunn
Vice President
Airports

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