

October 7, 2014

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Good Day;

I first came to work in Pierce County at Tacoma Narrows Airport (then owned by the City of Tacoma) in 1988, subsequently moving onto Thun Field in 1993. For slightly less than 2 years, I worked as the director of maintenance for a since out of business flight school. On January first of 1995, myself and another individual started an aircraft maintenance business; we chose to continue at Thun Field as we were impressed with the area, friendliness of the folks, and the way the airport operated – everyone got along. In May of the same year, we incorporated as the business now wholly-owned by me, AVSTAR Aircraft of Washington, Inc. Through the ups and downs of the economy, I am proud to say AVSTAR has survived and thrived for almost 20 years, contributing to the airport not only as a tenant, but as a provider of jobs and tax revenue for the county and state.

Over the course of the last 2 years, I came to realize that I needed to make an investment for myself, and chose to acquire my own facility. Through diligence with a banking partner and working with the SBA, we made that happen, and as I write this letter, I am sitting in my new office, part of the new Hangar A1 at 10415 176th St. E. Yes, for the same reasons stated above for staying at Thun Field 20 years ago, I chose to remain here. My investment of several hundred-thousand dollars was set into action long before things took a nasty change for the worse.

You see, my business, like all others, requires access to and for my customers. No, I am not a store-front retailer by nature, but I still require my customers to be able to access my business. True, the aircraft I work on fly in; in fact, over 90% of my customers are based at other airports; we draw in work from all over the Western United States, as well as Western Canada. That, however, does not preclude the fact that when a more local customer drops his / her aircraft off for our magic touch they need to quite often drive off and then back on to the airport. As part of the same discussion, we have experienced several occasions where a drive-up customer was gained because he / she simply came out to the airport to look around and see what was available. Sadly, due to a policy change that went through without acceptance of public comment; that has abruptly ended.

I suppose we should have seen this coming several years ago when night-time gates were installed to the north and south access roads to the airport, but after all, night time security seemed like a good idea at the time. As you are aware, we now have these gates operational 24-hours. But let us stop for a moment and look at all the effects of these gates:

- 1. Access to my business, as well as a few others, is now severely restricted. This virtually eliminates the drive-up customer from finding us. This does not occur with the businesses located center field, between the gates. That is plainly an unfair competition advantage the county has handed them.
- 2. For the drive in customers that we already have, they now must call us from the gate interphone so we can push a code to let them in. This requires either me or one of my employees to be able to get to and answer the phone. That is time away from the job that I pay for, not only in their wages, but leading to an interruption of work and content. The type of business I have requires full concentration to task, and what may seem like a 30 second interruption could turn into an error due to that interruption, possibly leading to maintenance induced failure. I find that to be an unacceptable position that the county has put me into.
- 3. Not only the unfair competition factor discussed in 1 above, but the implementation of said security measure is far from being applied equally. As I walked around the airport the other day, I note there is a short 3-foot tall fence still between

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the airport office and the Spanaflight building with a walk-through gate totally unsecured. Additionally, one could walk into Simflight / Spencer, Spanaflight or the restaurant and have easy access to the 'secure' portion of the airport.

The question of why the security is necessary has been posed. I asked Ms Deb Wallace to show me the Federal Aviation Regulation, State, or County law that requires said security at Thun Field. She flatly stated there wasn't one, that this was her decision. She has also told me a number of times that this policy is not up for debate. How can this be implemented without proper communication and approval? The answer is simple – it can't, and it wasn't. The three points above, as well as many others I discussed in the last TFAC meeting show this implementation was poorly conceived and executed.

The question of 'why do we need this new security' has also come up several times. Initially, I was told – I believe from Lissa Smith – that it was to keep the homeless from entering the airport. Ms Wallace later told me that no, it was because a (one was the example) non-airport person found their way onto the runway / taxiway with their car. Subsequently I read a statement attributed to Jay Simon that it was because of folks cutting through the fence and stealing items at TIW. Let's examine those in order:

- There already exist several holes in and under the fences for homeless folk to wander through. I seriously doubt any concession to the fence is keeping any of them out; if they are living in the woods between the airport and Meridian Avenue, I seriously doubt they will be 'driving' onto the airport.
- There are approximately 230 aircraft based at this airport. There are 10 businesses that call Thun Field 'home'. Supposing there is an average of even 5 employees for each business, that is a potential for 280 folks per day, plus their visitors and guests, that are 'airport people'. Wouldn't it make infinitely more sense to prosecute a trespasser / violator of the rules than to punish the folk that are using the airport property as intended?
- To Mr. Simon's comment how is a 24-hour gate going to stop someone from cutting a hole in a fence? Seriously, I'm interested in knowing this.

The bottom line comes down to two statements. First, without due process, my rights of unrestricted access to my business by my customers have been stripped from me. Second, and this has been proven to be true throughout the ages, the only thing locks do is keep honest people honest.

Common sense needs to prevail here, and the purpose of my writing you is to make headway in finding common ground regarding the need and implementation (if said need exists) of any security on both Thun Field and Tacoma Narrows Airport.

I look forward to your input and resolution to this issue.

Regards,

Michael E Thompson

President, AVSTAR Aircraft of Washington, Inc.

CC: Deb Wallace, Airport Administrator

Would also liked to have sent this to Pat McCarthy, County Executive, but could not locate an email for her. Could you please pass this along? Thank you, in advance.

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