

**Ridgeland Aviation Community Association (RACA)
Ridgeland – Claude Dean Airport (3J1)
224 Airport Road
Ridgeland, SC 29936**

January 31, 2024

To:

Mr. Michael Skinner
Treasurer, Jasper County Commission
P.O. Box 722
Ridgeland, SC 29936

Cc:

Mr. Marty Sauls
Chairman, Jasper County Council
P.O. Box 1417
Ridgeland, SC 29936

Cc:

Mr Andrew Fulghum
Administrator, Jasper County Administration
P.O. Box 1149
Ridgeland, SC 29936

Subject: SkyBlue Aviation LLC

Dear Mr. Skinner;

Please initiate an investigation of the Ridgeland – Claude Dean Airport Manager's failure to comply with Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Airport Improvement Program (AIP) Grant Assurances, specifically the Airport Manager's policy of not depositing the checks received from nearly every hangar-owner since 2018.

The Ridgeland Aviation Community Association (RACA) has filed a complaint with the FAA regarding this issue; however, the Association believes the public interest is best served if your office conducts a separate investigation to determine the current state of financial affairs at the airport. A copy of the Association's letter to the FAA is included.

Thank you in advance for addressing this matter with the County Administrator, the County Attorney and the Airport Manager.



Steven Schmidt
President, Ridgeland Aviation Community Association

**Ridgeland Aviation Community Association (RACA)
Ridgeland – Claude Dean Airport (3J1)
224 Airport Road
Ridgeland, SC 29936**

February 15, 2024

To: Ms. Keturah Pristell
Federal Aviation Administration
Office of Airports, Southern Region
Safety and Standards Branch (ASO-620)
1701 Columbia Ave., Suite 540
College Park, GA 30337

Cc: Jasper County Council
c/o Wanda Simmons
P.O Box 1149
Ridgeland, SC 29936

Subj: Request for Audit of Ridgeland – Claude Dean Airport Operations

Dear Ms. Keturah Pristell;

Since 2018, the Jasper County Council, as the Sponsor of Ridgeland – Claude Dean Airport (3J1), has been declining to deposit rent payments sent by hangar-owners as stipulated in their ground lease agreements. For instance, on May 30, 2023, Gopher Hill Hangar LLC submitted a \$9,800 check to the Sponsor to cover the upcoming 5-year installment for its hangar lease. Regrettably, the Sponsor did not deposit this check, rendering it invalid. This practice raises concerns about the Sponsor's competence in overseeing the airport's financial matters.

According to United States Code, Title 2, Subtitle A, Chapter II, Part 200, Subpart F, airport sponsors receiving FAA Airport Improvement Program grants must undergo annual audits to verify compliance with grant conditions and appropriate fund utilization for airport improvements. Therefore:

1. Kindly verify if the Sponsor has conducted the mandated audits from the inception of the requirement to the present.
2. Please furnish copies of the summary reports for each audit conducted.
3. If any audits were overlooked, please provide a brief explanation of the circumstances leading to non-compliance.
4. Consider conducting a special audit to assess the repercussions of the Sponsor's policy of neglecting to collect or deposit revenue from the ground leases of the airport's 42 hangars.

The ongoing failure of the Jasper County Council, as the Sponsor of Ridgeland – Claude Dean Airport (3J1), to adhere to the terms of ground lease agreements and properly manage rent payments from hangar-owners raises significant doubts about their ability to oversee the airport's financial affairs effectively. It is imperative that the Sponsor promptly address these concerns and demonstrate transparency and accountability in their financial management practices. Conducting the required annual audits, providing necessary documentation, and considering a special audit to evaluate the impact of their revenue collection policy on airport operations would be crucial steps towards ensuring compliance and restoring confidence in the Sponsor's stewardship of the airport.

Thank you in advance for addressing this matter with the Sponsor.



Steven Schmidt
President, Ridgeland Aviation Community Association (RACA)