



User Name: Dan Schulman

Date and Time: Thursday, March 21, 2019 1:58:00 PM EDT

Job Number: 85345007

Document (1)

1. [*College lease cleared: Attorney: Odom cancels Destin Jet property deal*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Ray Sansom and Matt Gaetz

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Content Type
News

Narrowed by
-None-

College lease cleared: Attorney: Odom cancels Destin Jet property deal

Northwest Florida Daily News (Fort Walton Beach, Florida)

June 3, 2009 Wednesday

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Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Business News

Section: STATE AND REGIONAL NEWS

Length: 544 words

Byline: Tom Mclaughlin, Northwest Florida Daily News, Fort Walton Beach

Body

Jun. 3--NICEVILLE -- A state-funded college building/emergency operations center planned for Jay Odom's Destin Jet property at Destin Airport appears dead.

Odom has signed documents clearing the way for Northwest Florida State College to get out of its lease, according to attorney **Matt Gaetz**, who represented Odom in executing the contract.

"Mr. Odom has executed the cancellation and the paperwork is in the possession of the county," Gaetz said Tuesday afternoon.

Okaloosa County Administrator Jim Curry said the county, which leases the Destin Jet land to Odom, could void the lease only after it receives notification that the college and Odom had cut their ties. Odom's agreement with the college was a sublease.

When that information is received, Curry said the county "will consider it terminated" and do whatever it takes, either through board action or executively, to let the college out of its sublease agreement.

The lease and its cancellation were discussed briefly Tuesday morning at the college's board of trustees meeting.

College attorney Joe Lorenz reported he had mailed requests to Odom and the county asking that the school be allowed to cancel its lease at the airport. He told the trustees he hadn't received a response from Odom or the county.

The trustees also voted Tuesday to hire Tallahasseebased attorney Mike Mattimore to represent the college at a mediation hearing with former President Bob Richburg.

Richburg was fired April 28 after a Leon County grand jury indicted him April 17 on felony charges of official misconduct and perjury.

Richburg's indictment stemmed from his role in bringing the college building to Destin Jet. The grand jury said the building, to be built with public funds, actually would have been used to house Odom's aircraft.

The \$6 million to pay for the hangar was funneled to Northwest Florida State College by then-state House speaker designate **Ray Sansom**, the grand jury said.

Sansom and Odom also are facing charges.

The building was not built.

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Soon after his firing, Richburg notified the college's trustees that he would contest his termination in front of an administrative law judge unless he either was reinstated or received a substantial settlement package.

He accused the board, which voted 4-3 with one abstention to fire him, of acting in bad faith.

Interim college President Jill White recommended that Mattimore represent the school because he represented Broward Community College after it fired its president.

Mattimore's fees will be covered by the Florida Community College Risk Management Consortium, White told the board.

After the trustees voted to seek Mattimore's counsel, board Chairman Wesley Wilkerson said accepting mediation did not mean the school was agreeing to Richburg's demands.

"We don't have to give in to anything in mediation," he said.

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Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Journal Code: FO

Acc-No: 20090603-FO-College-lease-cleared-0603

Subject: AGREEMENTS (90%); COMMUNITY COLLEGES (89%); COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (89%); MUNICIPAL FINANCE (89%); PUBLIC SCHOOLS (89%); UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION (89%); DISMISSALS (88%); INDICTMENTS (86%); GRAND JURY (86%); US STATE GOVERNMENT (78%); JUDGES (77%); LAWYERS (77%); LITIGATION (77%); COUNTIES (76%); BAD FAITH (76%); FELONIES (76%); COUNTY GOVERNMENT (76%); ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (74%); INTERIM MANAGEMENT (70%); BOARDS OF DIRECTORS (68%); MISCONDUCT (66%); PERJURY (64%); CRIMINAL OFFENSES (64%); RISK MANAGEMENT (50%)

Industry: COMMUNITY COLLEGES (89%); COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (89%); PUBLIC SCHOOLS (89%); LAWYERS (77%); RISK MANAGEMENT (50%); Medical

Person: MATT GAETZ (79%)

Geographic: FLORIDA, USA (93%)

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Load-Date: June 3, 2009

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