

VEHICLE FOR HIRE COMMISSION

CITY OF EDMONTON VEHICLE FOR HIRE COMMISSION

MEETING NO. 6

Wednesday, September 14, 2011

MEMBERS

M. Fysh
R. Clarke
C. Khehra
C. Kilburn
C. Leahey
J. Bruyer
J. Dziadyk

PRESENT

M. Fysh
R. Clarke
C. Khehra
C. Kilburn
C. Leahey
J. Bruyer
J. Dziadyk

Also in attendance;

Chief Livery Officer
VFH Commission Secretary
EPS
Transportation

G. Dziwenka
S. Weller
Suptd. S. Callioux
D. MacDonald

1. Call to Order

Chairman called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. and advised attendees that although the Commission thanks the industry for their comments regarding the taxi service, E.I.A. and the new Taxi licences, this matter is a City Council as a City Council initiative and thus not the responsibility of the Commission. The comments will be duly noted.

i

2. Approval of Agenda

MOVED CLARKE/DZIADYK

#1-09-11

That the agenda be approved as circulated.

FOR THE MOTION; Khehra, Fysh, Clarke, Kilburn, Leahey, Bruyer, Dziadyk

CARRIED

3. Approval of Minutes

MOVED KHEHRA/BRUYER

#2-09-11

That the minutes be approved as circulated.

FOR THE MOTION; Khehra, Fysh, Clarke, Kilburn, Leahey, Bruyer, Dziadyk

CARRIED

4. Public Involvement

Mr. Balraj Manhas

Balraj Manhas addressed the Commission and stated that the Airport issue is important to Edmonton. He acknowledges that the contract has been extended until May and he hopes the Edmonton taxi industry is involved next time.

He stated he feels there are not enough Inspectors on Whyte Avenue as there are lots of gypsy cabs as well as limos taking fares for \$10 and \$20.00.

Regarding the color application from Airport Taxi – his organization has no objection to competition, however they feel that the public could get confused when one company has two different colors and operates in different jurisdictions.

Mr. Leahey inquired as to how many members there were in Mr. Manhas's organization and whether or not the drivers at Yellow Cab were unionized.

Mr. Manhas stated that he represents approx. 869 members and that the unionization of Yellow Cab drivers has not yet been finalized but should be completed in the near future.

Mr. Allah Chebli

Mr. Chebli addressed the Commission and commented that if the Commission has no say in company names, logos, etc. the industry has a problem. Co-op Taxi has no problem with competition either, however he agrees with Mr. Manhas that Airport Taxi operating out of Leduc may have the same dispatch system, etc. and it may be confusing to distinguish which vehicles are licensed to operate in Edmonton and which ones operate out of Leduc.

Mr. Azhar Hussain

Mr. Hussain addressed the Commission and stated that he works approx. 12 hours a day – 4 of which is working and 8 of which is sitting around waiting for a fare. He believes it is a better idea to utilize his time better than to issue more plates. He works 7 days a week for 12 hours a day and it works out that he makes only \$7.00 per hour – he wonders how the Commission can contemplate issuing more plates.

During discussion it was ascertained that the Commission withdrew their previous motion to issue additional plates which was based on the formula in the Hara report due to industry concerns. The current situation was created by the industry appealing directly to City Council regarding the Airport issue.

Mr. Tadfusz Jurasz

Mr. Jurasz addressed the Commission and inquired why the Commission is entertaining a request from Airport Taxi when they are registered as a company in another municipality.

He was advised that fleet color approval is the first step in the process of obtaining a Taxi Brokers license.

Mr. Hatem Awwad

Mr. Awwad addressed the Commission and indicated that he was new to the business and can barely make a living – he questioned why the Commission would contemplate issuing any new plates – taxis are currently competing with various modes of transportation.

General discussion ensued regarding the requirements for businesses to operate in Edmonton, clarification that there is to be no discussion regarding the release of new plates and the industry decision to approach Council directly on taxi related matters.

Mr. Jatinder Deol addressed the Commission and stated that the industry approached Council directly as the Commission was not effective in assisting taxi drivers.

Mr. Ian Lee

Mr. Ian Lee, representing Yellow Cab, addressed the Commission regarding safety shields and side air bags. He requested an item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting to discuss a change to the shield requirement as certain shields prevent air bags from deploying as designed.

Mr. Manjinder Punia

Mr. Punia addressed the Commission and stated that he was part of the negotiation team with City Council and would like to clear the air – they want the best for City drivers including no discussion of issuing plates.

Regarding the application for color approval from Airport Taxi – he finds nothing wrong if they follow all the City regulations and Bylaws. The industry merely does not want new plates issued – there is currently not enough business for existing plates.

The new company could be good for drivers as long as no new plates are issued and they follow all the rules.

5. Business Arising

MOVED FYSH/CLARKE

#3-09-11

I move that the Commission endorse the 2010 Activity Report being sent by the Chief Livery Officer for consideration by Executive Committee, a draft of which report has been reviewed by the Commission

FOR THE MOTION; Khehra, Fysh, Clarke, Kilburn, Leahey, Bruyer, Dziadyk

CARRIED

6. Reports from Committees

a. Agenda Planning Committee

Chairman reported that the name of this Committee was originally the 'Executive Committee' which was changed to the 'Committee of the Whole' and is currently titled the 'Agenda Planning Committee'. The Committee is made up of all members of the Commission who meet two weeks prior to the meeting to structure the agenda. There will also be a review of the existing Safety Committee, Organization and Planning Committee and Driver Training Committee to assess their functions and re-organize if necessary.

MOVED LEAHEY/CLARKE

#4-09-11

That the Chairman's report be received as information.

FOR THE MOTION; Khehra, Fysh, Clarke, Kilburn, Leahey, Bruyer, Dziadyk

CARRIED

7. Administrative Matters

a. Vehicle For Hire Commission

Chairman suggested we postpone discussion of administrative matters as Mr. Dziwenka was required to leave the meeting for an indefinite period.

MOVED CLARKE/LEAHEY

#5-09-11

That Item #7 – Administrative Matters – be deferred until Mr. Dziwenka is in attendance at the meeting to report on these matters.

FOR THE MOTION; Khehra, Fysh, Clarke, Kilburn, Leahey, Bruyer, Dziadyk

CARRIED

b. Edmonton Police Service

Superintendent Callioux – acting on behalf of Superintendent Danielle Campbell also had to leave the meeting, therefore, a report regarding Police matters will be offered at the next meeting.

c. Edmonton Transportation

There was no new information to be discussed regarding Transportation issues.

8. New Business

a. 2010 Activity Report

A motion regarding the 2010 activity report was passed previously in the meeting.

b. Driver Appreciation Day

On the issue of Driver Appreciation Day, Mr. Khehra provided the following information:

The vehicle for hire industry includes the taxis, wheelchair accessible taxis, limousines and shuttle services. This industry is an essential part of our transportation system and contributes to our residents' economic, social, recreational, entertainment and personal needs. The Vehicle for Hire Commission would like to acknowledge and thank the drivers for their tremendous contributions through their exceptional courteous, friendly, safe and professional customer service, and being sensitive to the needs of our elderly and the disabled community.

The 8th Annual Driver Appreciation Day will be held on Wed. November 9, 2011 at 1:00 p.m., prior to the regular Commission meeting – Heritage Room, City Hall. The nominations have been open throughout the year, the deadline being Friday, October 14, 2011.

There will be 10 awards; Best Taxi Driver Customer Service Award (2), Best Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Driver Customer Service Award (1), Best Dressed Taxi Driver Award (2), Best Taxi Vehicle Appearance Award (2), Best Shuttle Driver Customer Service Award (1), Best Limousine Driver Customer Service Award (1), Best Driver of the Year Award (1). Citation certificates may be issued to those drivers who have demonstrated other acts of exceptional service.

We wish to encourage all taxi brokers, the United Edmonton Cabbies Association, the Alberta Limousine Association and other businesses, organizations, agencies and individuals, to sponsor this event or by naming an award.

Nominations for these awards may be made by any one using the services of a taxi, wheelchair accessible taxi, limousine or shuttle; the taxi brokers and industry associations; businesses, community organizations or other agencies; fellow drivers or others.

Nomination forms are available on line at www.edmonton.ca. Type Vehicle For Hire Commission into the search window – click on the title that states 'basic information – on this page under related links – click Vehicle For Hire Commission – on this page nomination forms are located under related documents. The Vehicle for Hire Commission/Licensing Office – 5th Floor HSBC Bank Place, Taxi Broker offices, the United Edmonton Cabbies Association and the Limousine Association will also have nominations forms.

For further information, please contact Shar Weller at 780.496.5244. Please submit your nominations via mail, email, fax or in person, addressed to:

Shar Weller. Vehicle for Hire Commission, The City of Edmonton, 3rd Floor. HSBC Building, 10250 – 101 Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 3P4. Fax 780.496.6054, email shar.weller@edmonton.ca

MOVED KHEHRA/LEAHEY

#6-09-11

That the Vehicle For Hire Commission establish a Driver Appreciation Awards Day Ad Hoc Committee consisting of three members, to organize the 8th annual event on November 9, 2011.

FOR THE MOTION; Khehra, Fysh, Clarke, Kilburn, Leahey, Bruyer, Dziadyk

CARRIED

Mr. Khehra indicated he would be happy to continue as a member of the 'team' assigned to assist with Driver Appreciation Day events. Mr. Clarke and Mr. Leahey also volunteered as members to assist with the event.

c. Application for Fleet Color Approval from Airport Taxi

Chairman stated that Airport Taxi has submitted a letter with photos attached to the VFH Commission office for approval of a vehicle color. It is standard procedure to obtain fleet color approval prior to submitting an application for a Taxi Broker License in the City of Edmonton.

MOVED FYSH/KHEHRA

#7-09-11

That the request from Airport Taxi for color and marking approval be received as information to be examined for consistency and compliance with Bylaws and Regulations.

FOR THE MOTION; Khehra, Fysh, Clarke, Kilburn, Bruyer, Dziadyk
OPPOSED; Leahey

CARRIED

9. News Articles

- a.** Calgary Sun article dated June 27, 2011 re; Direct bus service links downtown to airport.

There were no comments regarding the attached news article.

12. General Correspondence

There are no items under this heading.

13. In-Camera Items

There are no items under this heading.

Chairman stated that as per procedure, we would now offer an additional opportunity for individuals to address the Commission.

Mr. Husni El-Khateeb

Mr. El-Khateeb addressed the Commission and indicated that it is not democratic to not allow members to speak on any subject. He stated that driver's income has been decreasing because they are losing customers to gypsy cabs, etc. He feels that enforcement is neglecting gypsy cabs but they are giving tickets to legitimate drivers in front of Oil City.

Regarding fare refusals – if drivers feel threatened they will refuse a fare – they face a lot of dangers and there are times they must refuse a fare. Regarding the \$9.00 surcharge he feels that any driver caught abusing the additional charge should be severely penalized – he feels that it is one person causing the problems.

He stated that if drivers voices are not heard by the Vehicle For Hire Commission they will be heard on October 5th by City Council. They are losing business to hotel shuttles, gypsies, etc and they must tell City Council.

Mr. Farew Woldemariam

Mr. Woldemariam inquired whether or not taxi related items were the business of the Vehicle For Hire Commission – if not drivers will go to City Council. He commented as well that the Vehicle For Hire Commission was uninformed 5 years ago when Airport Taxi started and inquired as to why they would be involved now. He also stated that he would like to see better signage for existing loading zones and more loading zones established.

Mr. Vince Paniuk

Mr. Paniuk suggested that the City of Edmonton look at the Calgary program regarding parking enforcement. Drivers are allowed to park in front of hydrants if they maintain control of their cab. How could they get Bylaw, Police, etc. on board with this type of program.

Mr. Don MacDonald representing the Transportation Department responded that there is currently a study being conducted in Edmonton on similar issues which should be completed in the spring of 2011 at which time the results of the study will be released.

Mr. Paniuk requested that there be stakeholder involvement in this critical issue. He also stated, in response to Mr. Leahey's inquiry, that Co-op Taxi was not responsible for the rumour that there would be discussion at today's meeting regarding the issuance of new licenses.

Mr. Paniuk also inquired as to why the Vehicle For Hire Commission was approving colors for Airport Taxi when they have nothing to do with the operation of that company. He also wondered about the issuance of a \$250.00 ticket to a Co-op driver who was parked in a handicapped zone while assisting a senior and at Canada Place while assisting a handicapped individual get in a bus.

Mr. Rob Sterr

Mr. Rob Sterr, representing Airport Taxi addressed the Commission and inquired as to why their application for color approval would take an additional month when they had submitted all applicable information. He also stated that it appears to be a backwards process to approve colors prior to the business being licensed in the City of Edmonton. Mr. Sterr also inquired as to why there were representatives from the Vehicle For Hire Commission present when the Bylaw amendments regarding the issuance of additional plates were being discussed if they had not input into the matter.

Chairman thanked all individuals who attended the meeting and made presentations to the Commission.

14. Adjournment

As there were no further matters to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

The next regular Vehicle For Hire Commission meeting is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. in the Heritage Room at City Hall, Wednesday, October 12, 2011.


M. Fysh, Chairman


S. Weller, Administrative Assistant