

TAXI COMMISSION MEETING
Minutes of the May 16, 2005 meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Betty Sanford called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

II. ATTENDANCE

Present: Members Chair Sanford, Commissioners Daggett, Bresciano, Feehley, Councilor Whitehouse, Sergeant Dubois, Police Chief Magnant, City Attorney Sullivan, City Clerk Barnaby and Deputy City Clerk Kirby.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM APRIL 25, 2005

Frank Daggett moved to accept and approve the minutes of the April 25, 2005 Taxi Commission meeting. Seconded by Councilor Whitehouse and voted.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. Taxi Rate Study

Kelli Barnaby informed the Commission that the Taxi Rate Study was generated due to the issues that arose at the previous meetings concerning a taxi rate increase. The study depicts taxi rates for various cities/town and the populations of those cities/town.

Frank Daggett stated that Portsmouth is in line with most of the cities/towns in the study. Peter Bresciano said that he noticed that the majority of communities regulate each additional mile and asked how this compares with our regulation of each additional 1/8 of a mile?

Paul Ford indicated that patrons feel they receive a better value when traveling short distances.

Peter Bresciano stated that the taxi companies might make out better if they did a flat rate of \$1.00 per mile.

Peter Bresciano asked about increase in insurance costs. Paul Ford stated that there are basically two companies that taxi owners have to choose from and they have the option of dropping you at any time for various violations.

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Mr. Roseberry's Taxi Driver's License Appeal (not on the agenda)

Frank Daggett moved to review Mr. Roseberry's appeal for a taxi driver's license. Seconded by Councilor Whitehouse and voted.

Councilor Whitehouse stated that the Commission set it up that the Chief of Police would have the final say in these matters and we should not counteract on his decision. His job is to look out for the safety of the people.

Councilor Whitehouse stated that at the last meeting he questioned some of the items contained in the Police Chief Magnant's memorandum regarding Mr. Roseberry, however he agrees with Chief Magnant's decision to not issue him a license.

Peter Bresciano said that he too had questions, and now agrees that Mr. Roseberry's appeal should be denied.

Police Chief Magnant stated that everyone has read his memo and that he came to the Taxi Commission meeting to answer any questions the Commission may have. He advised the Commission that his first concern is for public safety and there were events in Mr. Roseberry's recent history that gave him pause for concern.

Councilor Whitehouse asked if Mr. Roseberry was requesting to open his own company or drive for another Taxi Company. City Clerk Barnaby stated that Mr. Roseberry was applying for a license to drive for another company.

On a unanimous voice vote, motion to deny Mr. Roseberry's application for a taxi driver's license passed.

2. Taxi Rate Increase

Councilor Whitehouse stated that at the last meeting he brought up the idea of a surcharge to assist taxi owners. After that meeting he talked to City Manager Bohenko again and the City Manager suggested an amendment regarding taxi rates and linking them to the CPI. This would eliminate having to go back to the City Council for future amendments to the taxi rates.

City Attorney Sullivan stated that there are a number of different CPI's that could be used and the Commission would need to choose one. He also stated that taxi fare's need to be in round numbers and the CPI's are usually not. This would make calculations for drivers and passengers difficult.

Gary Moran stated that insurance prices have gone way out of sight for taxi owners and they need immediate assistance with a rate increase.

Frank Daggett stated that insurance prices have gone out of sight for all businesses not just taxi owners.

Peter Bresciano asked if the CPI would apply to all rates (basic rate, additional 1/8 mile and standing rate) or one of the three.

Councilor Whitehouse stated that we could amend the ordinance to adjust the CPI for the additional 1/8 of a mile only.

City Attorney Sullivan stated that the ordinance could be amended to use the CPI on the additional 1/8 mile and that the figure be rounded to make it easy to compute for the taxi driver's and the passengers.

Peter Bresciano asked what the additional 1/8 of a mile is set at now. Paul Ford stated that it is \$.25.

Sergeant Steve Dubois asked if we could bump up the rate now and then use the CPI.

Paul Ford agreed that we need to keep it simple like City Attorney Sullivan stated. He said that his company came up with a ten-cent increase, which would carry the taxi owners. He stated that the city is growing and as the city continues to grow, we could have shorter routes for pickups and drop-offs.

Chair Betty Sanford asked what is going to happen when the Navy Yard closes.

James Feehley stated that the closing of the Navy Yard could devastate them.

Frank Daggett said it would be years before the yard is completely closed so there is no use getting into that now.

Peter Bresciano asked Paul Ford if his clientele are mostly locals or tourists?

Jim Feehley responded for Paul stating that the majority of his clientele is local but during the summer it is more 50/50.

Frank Daggett suggested that one, we increase the fare ten cents and get it to the City Council. Two, that we amend the ordinance to include the CPI.

Councilor Whitehouse moved to have the City Attorney report back with a draft ordinance amending the additional 1/8 of a mile from \$.25 to \$.35 at the June meeting. Seconded by Frank Daggett.

Peter Bresciano asked when the City Attorney was to report back, the next meeting? That would be too long. The taxi owners are struggling now. Peter Bresciano said he wanted to see the request expedited.

Councilor Whitehouse stated that there would be some opposition from the City Council. They are concerned with any increase in fees.

Peter Bresciano stated that if we wait until after our next meeting to send it to the City Council and then it has to have three readings, it would be the end of August before the taxi companies get any relief.

City Attorney Sullivan stated that the Commission can have the ordinance drafted and Councilor Whitehouse can request that the Council submit it with first reading at the same time.

Chair Betty Sanford called for a roll call vote on Councilor Whitehouse's motion. On a voice vote 3-3, motion failed to pass. Chair Sanford, Councilor Whitehouse and Commissioner Daggett voted in favor. Commissioner's Peter Bresciano, James Feehley and Police Sergeant Dubois voted opposed.

Peter Bresciano moved to direct City Attorney Sullivan to draft an ordinance amending the additional 1/8 mile rate from \$.25 to \$.35 to be presented to the City Council at the June 6th City Council meeting for a possible first reading. Seconded by Frank Daggett and voted.

VI. MISCELLANEOUS/UNFINISHED BUSINESS

City Clerk Barnaby advised the Commission that all taxi companies were sent their renewal information and all information is required back by Monday, June 13, 2005 to ensure that all renewals are processed by July 1, 2005.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:45 a.m., Councilor Whitehouse moved to adjourn. Seconded and voted.

Respectfully submitted by:

Dianne M. Kirby, Deputy City Clerk