MEMORANDUM
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EDHS
Agenda Item No. 6(A)

TO: Honorable Chairman Audrey M. Edmonson and Members of the Economic Development and Human Services Committee

DATE: February 13, 2008

FROM: Kay M. Sullivan
Director, Clerk of the Board Division

SUBJECT: Approval of Commission Committee Minutes

The Clerk of the Board Division is submitting the following Clerk's Summary of Minutes for approval by the Economic Development and Human Services Committee:

November 28, 2007

Attachment
KMS/jm

/

Stephen P. Clark
Government Center
111 N.W. 1st Street
Miami, FL 33128

CLERK'S SUMMARY OF

Meeting Minutes

Economic Development and Human Services Committee

Audrey M. Edmonson (3) Chair; Katy Sorenson (8) Vice Chair; Commissioners Barbara J. Jordan (1), Dennis C. Moss (9), and Javier D. Souto (10)

TAXICAB WORKSHOP

Wednesday, November 28, 2007 **10:00 AM** **COMMISSION CHAMBERS**

Members Present: Audrey M. Edmonson, Barbara J. Jordan.

Members Absent: Katy Sorenson, Javier D. Souto.

Members Late: Dennis C. Moss.

Members Excused: None.

Members Absent County Business: None.

1A INVOCATION

1B PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

1C ROLL CALL

Report: *The following staff members were present:*

~Assistant County Manager Alina Hudak
~Consumer Services Department Director Cathy Grimes Peel
~Deputy Clerk Zorana Gainer

1D CHAIRPERSON REMARKS

Report: *Chairwoman Edmondson welcomed everyone to today's (11/28) workshop. She stated that the Consumer Services Department (CSD) was under the purview of EDHSC and that since the committee's inception committee members had attempted to resolve issues related to Miami-Dade County's taxicab drivers and Consumer Services issues. Chairwoman Edmonson pointed out that the CSD taxicab study was accepted and some of the initiatives had been instituted, however there were other important issues such as the lottery program and the medallion system that needed to be resolved. She asked that the speakers be brief and to the point while expressing their concerns and needs in an effort to allow everyone to be heard.*

2 DISCUSSION ITEM(S)

TAXICAB WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS

I. TAXICAB LOTTERY PROGRAM & MEDALLION SYSTEM

Report: *Consumer Services Department (CSD) Director Cathy Grimes Peel gave a brief description of the taxicab lottery program and the medallion system which was adopted in 1998. She noted that the CSD has been working with the industry over the past few months to continue the lottery program for another three year period, the time allowed the county to work on a more permanent growth mechanism for the future. Ms. Peel noted that CSD has submitted an ordinance which would be presented for first reading on December 18, 2007, she noted that the proposal would recommend an issuance of 38 medallions per year in 2008, 2009 and 2010; all medallions would be directed to the North Dade and South Dade service areas which were both identified as areas that needed additional services. Ms. Peel also noted that the proposal would also recognize the need for taxicab dispatch technology and require that those with medallions be connected to a dispatch service and that the services be operated utilizing hybrid vehicles. Ms. Peel noted that in the past the lottery operated with veteran's categories for 20 and 25 year drivers. She noted the proposal included adding categories for 10 and 15 year drivers.*

Chairwoman Edmonson opened the meeting for public comments on the foregoing discussion item.

The following persons appeared before the committee and spoke in opposition to the discussion item:

Mr. Jorge Cortez spoke in opposition to the proposal to utilize hybrid cars.

Mr. John Frank Valdez, 8231 SW 157 Avenue spoke in opposition to the proposal to utilize hybrid cars.

Chairwoman Edmonson noted that she was not sold on the "hybrid cars" idea and asked Ms. Peel to provide committee members with a feasibility study regarding long term and short term maintenance costs.

Mr. Ramon Arascieta (phonetic) spoke in opposition to the lottery program being directed to any specific area.

Mr. Raymond Francois (phonetic), 11900 NE 16th Avenue, spoke in opposition to the lottery program, and noted that taxicab companies were charging drivers between 14% and 33% interest on loans.

With regards to taxicab companies charging drivers extraordinary high interest rates on loans, Ms. Peel explained that the reason the medallion program was set up was so that taxicab drivers would have something of value to borrow money against, in order to establish their own business. She noted there were financiers that would finance loans for medallions; however, as related to the lottery, CSD had worked with the Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) to set up a special loan program for lottery medallions; lottery medallions were less expensive than a medallion purchased on the open market, she added. Ms. Peel noted that for the past two to three years OCED had provided loans at approximately 8%. She noted that she was aware of the existing financing problems for persons purchasing medallions on the open market. Ms. Peel said that financiers were providing non-traditional loans for approximately 12%, she said that upon reaching out to traditional financing institutions there was not much success in getting them interested on a long term basis.

In response to Commissioner Jordan's inquiry regarding why OCED only extended loans to medallion lottery winners, Ms. Peel said it was a question of having the funds available to provide the loans and that the market value of a medallion currently was in the $200,000 range which was a significant amount, whereas a medallion obtained through the lottery was worth approximately $15,000 to $20,000, a significantly lower amount.

Commissioner Jordan expressed concern regarding loan companies offering loans at 30%. She stated that these were loan sharks and noted that she wanted to further explore the feasibility of OCED providing more loans.

Ms. Peel stated that she had seen 12% interest on loans, however she had never seen 30% interest on loans.

Commissioner Jordan stated that if any taxicab driver had proof that they had a loan with a percentage rate higher than 12% the information should be submitted to Ms. Peel's office.

Chairwoman Edmonson noted that CSD had the responsibility of due diligence to ensure that no loan sharks were on the list of lenders provided to taxicab drivers.

Mr. Aaron Richmond, 20191 E Country Club Drive, spoke in opposition regarding the lottery medallion program and adding additional taxicabs to fleets.

Chairwoman Edmonson stated that she had a resolution that may help alleviate the issues with fleet operations.

Ms. Angela Cruz, spoke in opposition to the lottery medallion program and stated that taxicab drivers had to pay $500 to enter into the lottery.

The following persons spoke in opposition to CSD's proposals for the lottery medallion program:

Mr. Aaron Richmond, 20191 E Country Club Drive
Mr. Ernst Derizer 830 NW 143rd Street
Mr. Valtes Mompremier 565 NW 210th Street
Mr. Wilfredo Bullock (phonetic) 3260 SW 66th Way, Miramar
Mr. Louis Jeune Grenoble 1545 NE 139th Street
Mr. Diego Feliciano
Mr. Rofino Harrison (phonetic) 130 NE 202 Terrace

II. AIRPORT REGIONAL TAXICAB SERVICES (ARTS)

073463 Discussion Item

A. RULES AND REGULATIONS
B. EXTENDING AIRPORT REGIONAL TAXICAB SERVICE TO INCLUDE ZONE C TRIPS ORIGINATING AT MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
C. AIRPORT KIOSKS FOR SUNPASS AND INTERNET

Report: *Ms. Peel gave an overview of the Airport Regional Taxicab Services (ARTS) program. She noted that the ARTS program was created in 1983 to address short term refusals at the airport and the program consisted of two flat rate taxicab zones that were in close proximity to the airport. A special fleet of taxicabs was painted blue for identification purposes and did not contain taxi meters inside and they provided one way trips from the airport to destinations within the zone. Initially, noted Ms. Peel, a fleet of 25 taxicabs were chosen from the existing fleet of taxicabs via a lottery and an additional 75 alternate taxicabs were selected as replacements for vehicles that left the program through attrition. Over time attrition had exhausted all of the alternate cabs and the fleet was currently almost depleted with between 15 and 18 taxicabs left, said Ms. Peel. Drivers asked the CSD to review the ARTS boundaries because they felt there were short trips outside of the designated ARTS zones which needed to be incorporated into the zones. The drivers requested operational changes at the airport as well, she added. Ms. Peel said that upon conducting various test runs, it was feasible to change the zones. She said the system was currently broken and not enough ARTS cabs were available to fulfill the volume of short term fares. She noted that this presented a problem for the yellow cabs, because the yellow cabs were required to take the short trip to the zone for a fare of only $10 or $14.*

Chairwoman Edmonson opened the meeting for public comments on the foregoing discussion item.

The following persons appeared before the committee in connection with the foregoing discussion item:

Mr. Ramon Arascieta
Mr. Antonio Jean-Charles 480 NE 136th Street
Ms. Angela Cruz 851 Blue Bird Avenue
Mr. Joseph 31120 NW 38th Court
Mr. Leslie Eisenberg, 3600 NW 37th Court
Mr. Gilbert Hernandez, President, Super Yellow Taxi

Mr. John Valdez
Mr. Louis Jeune Grenoble 1545 NE 139th Street
Mr. Joanel Ceremy 12930 NW 21st Avenue
Mr. Raymond Francois (phonetic)
Mr. Pierre Ceac 2001 NW 32nd Street

Chairwoman Edmonson asked Ms. Monica Beltran, Division Director of Landside Operations, Aviation Department to come forward.

Ms. Beltran quoted statistics regarding blue and yellow cabs at Miami International Airport (MIA). She noted that the night shift was short of blue cabs. She noted that a taxi line consisted of 30 lines and of the 30 lines, 29 lines were assigned to yellow cabs and one line was assigned to blue cabs. She said that the amount of taxicabs were so great at MIA, most were competing for the same fares, therefore drivers would have to wait for approximately 3 to 4 hours for the next fare. Ms. Beltran stated that she agreed that the solution was to bring up the number of blue cabs to 25 and ensure that blue cabs work on a 24 hour basis.

With regards to the Sunpass Kiosk Ms. Peel noted that Miami Dade Expressway Authority (MDX) paid for installation of a Kiosk at the taxi lot so the taxi drivers would have internet access to the Sunpass website. She recognized Mr. Steve Anders, Director of Operations MDX.

III. TECHNOLOGY

073464 **Discussion Item**

A. DISPATCH/RADIO
B. SECURITY SYSTEMS FOR TAXICABS
C. HYBRID VEHICLES
D. CITY OF MIAMI'S NEWEST RESOLUTION URGING THE COUNTY, AND CLIMATE CHANGE TASKFORCE, ASKED FOR HYBRID TAXIS, EXPENSE

IV. INHERITANCE PROVISIONS

073465 Discussion Item

A. FAMILY MEMBERS
B. TRANSFER PROVISIONS

Report: *Ms. Peel gave a brief overview regarding technology within the taxicab system. Ms. Peel said the taxicab study showed an absence of technology that was available in other communities and recommended that technology improvements were needed in order to improve taxicab services. She noted that approximately 40% of Miami-Dade's taxicabs were not radio dispatched. Technology improvements sited in the taxicab study were as follows:*

~Eliminating the ability to use cellular telephones as an accepted means of dispatch,
~Requiring all taxicabs to be connected to a GPS electronic dispatch system,
~Centralizing dispatch and wheelchair accessible taxi cabs,
~and requiring credit card acceptance and processing in all taxicabs.

Ms. Peel noted that the taxicab study suggested that CSD sponsor a technology exposition to acquaint the industry, the Commission, and the public with all of the types of technology options available. She said CSD would be having an exposition in the lobby of the Stephen P. Clark Center (111 NW 1st Street) on Monday December 3, 2004 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

In response to Chairwoman Edmonson's inquiry regarding who would pay for the new technology, Ms. Peel said that issue had not been decided.

Chairwoman Edmonson opened the meeting for public comments on the foregoing discussion item.

The following persons appeared before the committee in connection with the foregoing discussion item:

Mr. Jerry Moskowiz, President, Moskocab/Coral Cab, 2284 NW 36th Street
Mr. Robert Puente
Mr. Jean Larone
Mr. John Valdez
Mr. Raymond Francois (phonetic)

With regard to issues pertaining to insurance for taxicab drivers, Chairwoman Edmonson inquired

and asked Ms. Peel to explain insurance coverage for taxicab drivers.

Ms. Peel explained that insurance that was required by County Code was third party insurance which covered passengers in the taxi, property, and other vehicles that the taxi may damage, but did not cover the taxicab driver or collision on the taxicab.

In response to Chairwoman Edmonson's inquiry regarding taxicabs for the handicapped, Ms. Peel said there were approximately 65 wheelchair accessible taxicabs, that were all issued via the lottery program. She noted that half of these vehicles were not connected to a radio dispatch system and utilized cellular telephones for dispatch.

Commissioner Moss asked about other communities where taxicabs were owned by the drivers. He asked if those communities operated via radio dispatch and if so, how was the technology implemented.

Ms. Peel responded to Commissioner Moss' inquiry, noting that most taxicabs were operated using the fleet system and the dispatch technology was mostly due to private investment in the technology and that other communities required technology improvements in all of their taxicabs.

Mr. John Morrow, Division Director, Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division (PTRD) noted that the City of Philadelphia had made an aggressive investment to place centralized dispatch and GPS technology throughout the entire taxicab industry.

In response to Commissioner Moss' inquiry whether Miami-Dade County had considered something similar to this, Mr. Morrow stated that they decided to inform the industry what type of technology was available first.

Commissioner Moss noted that Miami-Dade County was trying to move away from the Fleet aspect of services and must come up with a plan to implement the new technology, however did not want to impose unreasonable things on drivers.

Mr. Morrow concurred with Commissioner Moss and stated they were researching a way to pay for the technology, and that the technology fair would begin the process.

The following persons appeared before the committee in connection with the foregoing discussion item:

Ms. Angela Cruz, 851 Blue Bird Avenue
Mr. Aaron Richmond, 20191 E Country Club Drive
Mr. Antonio Jean-Charles, 480 NE 136th Street
Mr. Atik Raymond (phonetic)
Mr. Clifford Pierre, 1196 NW 11th Street
Mr. Jerry Moskowiz, President, Moskocab/Coral Cab 2284 NW 36th Street
Mr. Ernst Derizer, 830 NW 143rd Street
Mr. Louis Jeune Grenoble, 1545 NE 139th Street
Mr. Pierre Ceac, 2001 NW 32nd Street
Mr. Diego Feliciano
Mr. Gilbert Hernandez, President, Super Yellow Taxi

Ms. Peel clarified that the current code does not require companies to have radio service, they are only required to have dispatch service which can be via a cellular telephone.

Chairwoman Edmonson noted that there was insufficient time to cover the remaining agenda items and that another meeting would be scheduled to complete the following items:

~Inheritance Provisions (Family Members and Transfer Provisions)
~Taxicab Lease Prices
~Insurance Coverage For Driver & Vehicle

Commissioner Jordan asked Ms. Peel to include emergency 911 to the discussion, security features and the possibility of the county funding technology.

V. TAXICAB LEASE PRICES

VI. INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR DRIVER & VEHICLE

3 ADJOURNMENT