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Supplement to
Agenda Item No.
1(D)1

December 8, 2009

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSION AUDITOR**

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Carlos A. Gimenez, Chairman
and Members, Government Operations Committee

FROM: Charles Anderson
Commission Auditor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Anderson", is written over the printed name and title.

DATE: November 19, 2009

SUBJECT: Summary Minutes from Taxicab Meeting

At the September 8, 2009, Government Operations Committee meeting, Commissioner Martinez asked the County Attorney's Office and Commission Auditor's Office to meet with Taxicab Representatives to discuss their concerns. The meeting was held on Wednesday, October 21, 2009. Attached please find the summary minutes listing the attendees and the topics discussed at the meeting.

If you need additional information, please feel free to contact me.

c: George M. Burgess, County Manager
R. A. Cuevas, Jr., County Attorney
Gerald Sanchez, Assistant County Attorney
Cathy Peel, Director, Consumer Services Department
Diane Collins, Acting Division Chief, Clerk of the Board Division

Board of County Commissioners (BCC)

Office of the Commission Auditor

TAXICAB MEETING

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

County Attorney's Office, Stephen P. Clark Center

111 NW First Street, 28th Floor Conference Room

Attendees:

Gerald Sanchez	County Attorney's Office	305.375.5151
Charles Anderson	Office of the Commission Auditor	305.375.4354
Guillermo Cuadra	Office of the Commission Auditor	305.375.5469
Zaba Castro	Commissioner Martinez' Office	305.552.1155
Cathy Peel	Consumer Services Department	305.375.5952
Joe Mora	Consumer Services Department	305.375.2442
David Iglesias	Consumer Services Department	305.375.4577
Jerry Moskowitz	Coral Cab	305.633.2227
Dawood Akhtar	Owner/Driver, Miami Yellow Cab	786.229.7861
Diego Feliciano	So. FL. Taxi Association (SFTA)	305.710.4142
Susan Fried	So. FL. Taxi Association (SFTA)	305.778.2210
Juan A. Ruiz	Owner/Driver, Miami Yellow Cab	305.431.6298
Andy Khatri	Driver, Yellow Cab	305.444.8888
Niaz Mohammad	Driver, Yellow Cab	305.979.5379
Babar Khan	Owner/Driver, Miami Yellow Cab	305.302.7007
Valtes-Mompremier	Owner/Driver, Crown Taxi	305.917.3164
Les Eisenberg	Yellow Cab	305.444.4444

TOPICS DISCUSSED

Lottery for Issuance of For-hire Licenses

1. A number of the participants stated that more medallions should be issued.
2. Although no consensus was reached regarding the number of additional for-hire licenses that should be issued, to the extent that additional licenses are issued, a significant number of the participants agreed that senior drivers should be given priority in future lotteries.
3. One participant suggested that fifty (50) additional for-hire licenses should be issued through a lottery.
4. In response, a number of participants noted that approximately 2,100 for-hire licenses have already been issued and that the market is saturated.

Operating Costs including Lease Prices Paid by Drivers

1. Drivers stated that operating costs including, but not limited to, the lease price and county-imposed fees paid by drivers are too high.
2. The statement was made that inspection fees charged by the County are passed through to drivers and incorporated into the lease price.
3. The County Attorney's Office advised the participants that the County does not have authority to control lease prices.
4. One participant stated that lease prices have gone up by 25% since 1972.
5. Another participant suggested that lease prices would be reduced if a substantial number of new for-hire licenses were issued.
6. Others disputed this conclusion stating that there are already too many taxicabs.

Insurance Coverage

1. Various drivers stated that Personal Injury Protection (PIP) coverage and life insurance should be made available to the drivers.
2. Although third-party coverage is mandated by State law, taxicabs are exempt from PIP coverage.
3. County Code does not require the driver to be covered by PIP or life insurance.
4. Consumer Services Department (CSD) referenced a prior report that reviewed the availability of low cost Accidental Death & Dismemberment (ADD) coverage that provides a death benefit and other coverage that is similar to PIP.
5. One participant stated that PIP coverage on a driver's personal vehicle can also be used to cover injuries sustained while driving a taxicab.
6. To the extent that life insurance and/or PIP coverage is either voluntarily provided by for-hire license holders or mandated by law, it was stated by some participants that the costs associated with such coverage would be passed along to the driver and included in the lease price.

Taxicab Advisory Group (TAG) Committee

1. A driver expressed the view that chauffeurs are not adequately represented on the TAG Committee which was created by the Consumer Services Department.
2. The view was expressed that additional chauffeur representation should be considered.

Underserved Taxicab Service Areas

1. Concern was expressed by various drivers regarding the lack of business in the two underserved taxicab areas provided for in the Code: the Underserved Taxicab Area and the South Dade Taxicab Area.
2. Various participants shared the rationale for the underserved areas including the desire to ensure that taxicab service would be available throughout Miami-Dade County including, among other areas, Liberty City, Overtown and South Dade.

3. Certain participants stated that there should be no restricted areas or that the number of vehicles serving these areas should be reduced given economic conditions.
4. At least one participant stated that taxicab work in these areas is not well coordinated due to inadequate radio service.



JOE A. MARTINEZ
MIAMI DADE COUNTY COMMISSIONER
DISTRICT 11

To: Honorable Chairman Carlos Gimenez and
Members of the Government Operations Committee

From: Commissioner Joe A. Martinez 

Date: July 17, 2009

Re: Taxicabs

Recently, I met with various taxicab drivers to discuss concerns they had over their industry and the direction in which it is headed. The conversation centered around the issuance of medallions, insurance coverage and rates and the division between the North and South routes.

The issuance of the medallions continues to be a difficult process. Medallions are awarded via lottery without taking into account the years some drivers have put into their careers. A person can be driving for 25 plus years and someone with only one year on the job can win the medallion lottery. In other words, seniority is meaningless when it should actually count for something. While this system may be set up to ensure that there is not a monopoly on the medallions' use, I believe there may be an alternative method.

To illustrate, if 40 medallions are issued per year, we can issue 15 to drivers with over 25 years of driving experience based on seniority. If the driver chooses not to purchase a medallion, then it would move down the list to the next person. The next 15 medallions would follow the same process, but they would be reserved for drivers with more than 20 years experience, but less than 25. The final ten medallions would be issued via lottery for all remaining drivers with less than 20 years experience. In order to ensure the years of experience, the Consumer Services Department would be required to maintain a list with the date of license and/or issuance of permit, which should be on record regardless.

This is just one possibility, but by using this process, time in service would be recognized and also allow those that would like to retire someday the opportunity to bequeath the medallion to their relatives or heirs. The numbers can fluctuate and the industry as a whole should have input as these are the views of a few senior drivers and may not reflect the common wants and needs. At the very least, it is a starting point to begin a formal review of the process in its entirety.

We are all dealing with astronomical insurance rates and taxicab drivers are not immune. Although I am not sure what our authority might be in this area, I have been advised that rates for the drivers increased to \$425.00 per month, yet the drivers themselves are still not covered. It is understandable that insurance is required, but certainly it would be a better system if the drivers were also covered under the policy--assuming that we are able to make changes on this issue.

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Members of the Government Operations
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Finally, my understanding is that the County is divided into two sections, North and South. Apparently, this division also prohibits a driver from picking up passengers not in their assigned territory even if they are in the area dropping off another passenger. This is a wasteful practice as it is neither economical, nor is it beneficial to the environment. Surely, there is a better way to do things.

These are just some of the concerns from members of the taxicab industry that became my concerns once they were brought to my attention. Therefore, I believe it would be prudent and respectfully request a discussion item on a future Government Operations committee to review these issues dealing with the taxicab industry.

cc: Carlos Alvarez, County Mayor
George Burgess, County Manager
R. A. Cuevas, Jr., County Attorney
Cathy Grimes Peel, Consumer Services Department