

**TAXI AND LIMOUSINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

**July 9, 2009**

PRESENT: Councillor Stephen Adams, Chair  
Mr. Robert Richards  
Ms. Joanne Coffey  
Ms. Cathy Towers  
Mr. Jamie Bolduc  
Mr. Derek Mathers  
Mr. Gary Russell  
**Mr. Richard McNeil**

REGRETS: **Ms. Lisa Dahr**  
Mr. Earl Brown

STAFF: Mr. Kevin Hindle, Regional Coordinator, Taxi & Limousine Services  
Mr. Mark Calvi, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. at the Captain William Spry Centre.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - June 11, 2009**

**MOVED BY Robert Richards, seconded by Jamie Bolduc, that the minutes of June 11, 2009 be approved, as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

**ADDITIONS:**

7.1 Retirement of Taxi Roof Light Numbers

**MOVED BY Richard McNeil, seconded by Jamie Bolduc, that the Order of Business be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES**

**4.1 Motion by Robert Richards - Notice of Motion regarding Zoning**

**MOVED BY Robert Richards, seconded by Jamie Bolduc, that brokers in HRM not be permitted to hire out of zone taxis.**

Discussion ensued regarding Mr. Robert Richard's motion.

Mr. McNeil commented that restrictions may protect income, but not if the customers' ability to get a taxi is compromised and they are therefore unsatisfied with service.

Mr. Hindle noted that the wording of the motion may need some revision, stating that drivers actually have brokers work for them, and that the decision is for the drivers or the owners themselves to choose the company from which they wish to be dispatched. By-law T-108 does not cover brokers and more input would be required to effectively alter current regulation.

Mr. Mathers called for clarification of the motion and the intended purpose behind it.

Mr. Richards responded stating that he has received feedback and complaints from drivers reporting that because of the limited amount of cars for each zone, when zones are not

respected, business is being taken away by taxis working outside of their own respective zones. Drivers have a tendency, especially on weekends, to stay within the Halifax zone whether it is their zone or not, and are potentially turning away customers travelling outside of this zone.

Mr. Mathers commented that it is not his company's policy to encourage county drivers to pick up and drop off in the Halifax zone. Drivers may however, pick up in the Halifax zone and leave the zone.

Councillor Adams noted that what has been brought to his attention is that county cars have been taking clients from Lord Nelson to airport, which is not in violation of any by-law. The concern would arise when county drivers are picking up and dropping off in the Halifax zone.

Mr. Hindle stated that his office has handled six complaints in 2009 in relation to zone violations, with three confirmed violations for which tickets have been issued. Three complaints have not been confirmed because drivers were either picking up and leaving zone for the remainder of the trip, or had a partial drop off along the way because of multiple passengers.

Prearranged trips are regarded the same as any other call.

Councillor Adams stated that when violations occur they have to be reported, as all in the industry are affected.

**MOTION DEFEATED.**

**5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS - NONE**

**6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS**

**6.1 PRESENTATION**

**6.1.1 HRM Taxi Zone Structure (Brian Herman)**

Handouts were given to Committee members at the June 11 meeting in regard to Mr. Herman's presentation. Mr. Herman provided a recap of the handout information, with key points concerning zone structure and customer and driver trends.

Mr. Herman stated that the trend for drivers is always to migrate to areas with higher pay demand. The method employed for dispatch procedure is to subdivide the core city into 23 different zones, drivers sign in and wait. The overall structure for HRM is divided into

Halifax, Dartmouth and County zones. Mr. Herman stated that if all zones are taken away, drivers will naturally migrate to most dense zone being the city core. Zones allow stability and if they are removed, driver patterns will change and other areas will be under serviced. Drivers will be less likely to travel a greater distance unless they are returning to city. The airport provided a good example to illustrate this point with deadhead miles being the main issue. If zones are removed airport taxis would go into the city core and the airport would most likely become under serviced.

Mr. Herman further stated that his company does not enable any drivers to engage in any activity that would violate by-law regulations with respect to zoning. Drivers are excluded from calls outside of their respective zones by way of the dispatch system. It is imperative that companies and individuals involved in the taxi business meet their obligation to protect the industry and its customers.

Mr. McNeil inquired as to how cars are assigned to specifically the Halifax zoning designations as previously mentioned by Mr. Herman, and if there are any restrictions within these zones. Mr. Herman replied that drivers choose to work in a particular zone based on demand. There is no requirement for drivers to sign in to any specific zone - drivers are independent contractors. The smaller zones within the larger Halifax zone have been set out for customer service reasons, to look after the end user customer, which in turn also allows drivers to better protect the business.

Mr. McNeil commented that what is good for the customer is not necessarily good for the driver and vice versa, citing deadheading in Dartmouth as an example. Mr. Herman in response stated that deadheading is reduced through the established zone structure.

Weekend nights (peak hours), large community events, concerts, etc. are often an exception due to large customer demand, and regular zoning restrictions can become less binding for drivers. Mr. McNeil inquired about special venues and whether there is difficulty in allocating drivers. Mr. Herman stated that controls are very limited and that the nature and setup of the business does not enable the ability to order drivers to take specific calls.

Mr. Bolduc commented that there is a large amount of self policing involved for drivers, dispatchers and brokers. Mr. Bolduc inquired as to whether dispatchers notify drivers that there are no cars in a specific zone. Mr. Herman responded that it can difficult to predict where cars will be needed.

Ms. Joanne Coffey inquired about wheelchair accessible taxis, whether such vehicles are free from zone restrictions, and how these calls are managed. Mr. Herman responded stating that it is at the discretion of drivers to drive specially equipped vehicles, and that the reality of economics means a limited number of cars to service the entire region. In order to provide HRM with more accessible taxis, funding may need to be considered.

Mr. Hindle inquired about the dispatch system and the subdivision of zones within Halifax, and how the concentration of cars in one area effects outlying areas wait times. Mr. Herman replied that zones must be set to provide a balance between revenue and customer demand and that for his company 75% of calls are served within 15 minutes. Making zones bigger does not improve customer service or response time. Mr. Mathers added that smaller zones allow for the driver to stay in their respective zone and reduce deadhead mileage.

Mr. Herman commented that there needs to be a better understanding of the working operation of the taxi industry and that often groups addressing the Committee are not representative of the industry overall.

Mr. McNeil made mention that deadheading is a standard mode of operation in Dartmouth and that there are neglected areas within HRM where customers have difficulty getting a taxi. Mr. Herman noted that by law regulations do not always address the reality of what actually happens in practice during daily operations.

Mr. Mathers stated that the elimination of zones is not commonly a broker lead issue; individual drivers are more frequently in favour of the removal of zones.

## **7. ADDED ITEMS**

### **7.1 Retirement of Taxi Roof Light Numbers**

There have been a number of requests to address this issue, but it was noted that there is currently no policy in place. Mr. Hindle mentioned that there was a motion before Council and that this matter has been coming forward from various sources.

Councillor Adams asked Committee members to suggest appropriate criteria as to under what conditions roof light numbers could be retired. The following points were proposed:

- number of years of service - potentially 25 years or greater;
- death in line of duty;
- family member request;

## **8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting date is to be determined.

## **9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:58 a.m.

Mark Calvi  
Legislative Assistant