

**TAXI AND LIMOUSINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
March 10, 2006**

PRESENT: Mr. Bill Harrison, Interim Chair
Mr. Wayne Black
Ms. Darlene Grant-Fiander
Mr. Derek Mathers
Mr. Denis St. Laurent
Mr. Robert Richards

ABSENT WITH
REGRETS: Mr. Hari Boggs, Vice-Chair
Mr. Tim Hosford
Mr. Paul Matthews

STAFF: Mr. Kevin Hindle, Regional Coordinator, Taxi and Limousine
Services
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Interim Chair called the meeting to order at 10:05 am in Conference Room "C" at the Keshen Goodman Library, 330 Lacewood Drive, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

MOVE: Agenda Item 4.1.1 Invited Guest, Mr. Jerry Kozubal, Winnipeg, MB to be dealt with immediately following approval of the agenda.

ADDITIONS: 5.2.1 Update on Re-evaluating the National Taxi Standards - *Ms. Darlene Grant Fiander*
5.2.2 Waiting Lists for Taxi Roof Lights - *Mr. Derek Mathers*
5.2.3 Certification of Limousine Drivers - *Mr. Bobbie Richards*

The Committee approved the agenda as **amended**.

The Committee agreed to deal with Item 4.1.1 Invited Guest, Mr. Jerry Kozubal, Winnipeg, MB at this time.

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

4.1.1 Invited Guest, Mr. Jerry Kozubal, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Mr. Kevin Hindle, Regional Coordinator, Taxi and Limousine Services, introduced Mr. Jerry Kozubal, Secretary of the Taxi Cab Board, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Mr. Kozubal was invited to provide background on what has transpired in Winnipeg in regard to the introduction of safety systems in Winnipeg taxi cabs.

Mr. Jerry Kozubal provided the following information:

- The Winnipeg Taxi Cab Board has jurisdiction over taxi cabs, limousines, wheelchair vans, accessible and Handi-cab vans. Mr. Kozubal is responsible for the administration of the 539 licenses in the City of Winnipeg.
- The taxi cab industry in Winnipeg is regulated by the Manitoba Taxi Cab Board, a provincial tribunal, with five members appointed by the Governing Council and two members appointed by the City of Winnipeg for a total of seven members.

- Asimilar tragedy occurred in Manitoba with the murder of a taxi driver in July 2001. As a result of the murder, the taxi cab industry met with the Minister of Transportation and lobbied for safety measures such as cameras, shields etc. be introduced to reduce the risk to the drivers. The Minister agreed to review what was available and provide a recommendation. By October of 2001, a Consultant's Report was presented to the Minister of Transportation. The Minister then agreed to proceed with the implementation of safety measures. Mr. Kozubal was hired and began work with the Winnipeg Taxi Cab Board in November 2001.
- As part of the Implementation Plan to improve the workplace safety of drivers, three working committees where established: 1. Training Committee, 2. Safety Committee, 3. Public Relations Committee.
- Representation on the Committees was from the taxi cab industry, owners, drivers, dispatch companies and representation from the Winnipeg Taxi Cab Board.
- The objective of the working committees was to assess what information/measures were available whether it be cameras, shields, better driving training and ways to make the occupation safer.
- The Safety Committee was the most active and met twice monthly. The first priority was to establish a list of what measures were available. The United States Occupational Health and Safety Agency has a list of the top ten measures available for safety within taxi cabs including: cameras, shields, GPS system, emergency responses (roof lights that could be used in emergency situations) and the Committee prioritized that the camera would be the most important item. Within six weeks, major camera manufacturers were identified and three were invited to meet with the Committee (February or March of 2002).
- The Safety Committee made the recommendation to the Winnipeg Taxi Cab Board in April 2002 for the "Silent Witness" option (camera). IT was determined that one piece of software and one installer would be more efficient than a variety of manufacturers/installers.
- Other features to be considered with the camera option were Customer Privacy and Access to the Images. A protocol was established that images would only be downloaded if a criminal act had taken place. The police would download the images. Less serious offences could be downloaded by the Taxi Inspector who would then provide that information to the Winnipeg police service.
- Once the industry made the recommendation, the Winnipeg Taxi Cab Board accepted it, revised the regulations and made the camera mandatory effective July 2002.
- It was important for all drivers to receive training on the cameras therefore a one-hour training session was offered to the 1,600 drivers. The drivers had a twelve

- month period in which to complete the training and were given the option of choosing the date for the training session.
- Crimedata was reviewed regarding robberies/assaults and it was discovered that 80% of the attacks occurred directly behind the driver, therefore an “L” shaped shield was recommended to reduce the risk to the driver. (A portable shield that attached to the drivers seat was located in Sweden).
 - The shield became mandatory as of January 8, 2003.
 - If the camera breaks the vehicle is out of service until the camera is fixed. If the shield breaks, the vehicle is also out of service until the shield is repaired/replaced.
 - Within one year both the shield and cameras were in place and mandatory within the legislation.
 - A number of other measures were also introduced and made mandatory: 1. Spike Light to be working at all times, 2. Driver controlled automatic trunk release, 3. Training program was improved regarding driver safety (mandatory orientation program), 4. First Aid Kits are mandatory (First Aid training is not mandatory but the kit is mandatory).
 - Within 1.5 years all the safety measures were in place. A review of the police records showed that in the first year there had been a 70% reduction in reports of assaults/robberies, the second year showed a 79% reduction than in prior years.
 - 86% of drivers and owners, after one year of introducing the measures, felt the cameras were the most effective measure and made them feel safer on the job.
 - Shields are a little more controversial: night drivers find the shields to be more effective, day drivers are more comfortable without the shields but since the shields are mandatory they must be in place at all times.

Mr. Kozubal responded to questions of the Committee as follows:

- In regard to financing the safety devices, he explained that a \$0.25 safety surcharge was introduced over a three year period. Once all expenses were met (by 2003), the industry returned to the Winnipeg Taxi Cab Board and indicated that the \$0.25 safety surcharge could be dropped. (The taxi cab industry subsequently requested and received a \$0.25 meter increase).
- He indicated that he has a staff of three Inspectors and one Chief Inspector. The dispatch companies also have staff who assist in assuring that the vehicles are in working order. It is ultimately the driver's responsibility to do a pre-trip check to ensure the vehicle is in proper working order.
- Winnipeg has 409 standard cabs and 20 regular cabs that were required to have the cameras/shields. The limousines and Handi-cab vans did not require the cameras/shields. There is no limit on taxi licenses.

- Important part of the process was that all major stakeholders were involved with the decision making process. A Newsletter was issued and copies of the minutes were posted on the bulletin board. The public were also informed.
- When choosing a camera the features reviewed were: still images (programmable digital sequences), digital memory (images maintained in the memory so memory size is important). The memory chip is in a separate location from the camera therefore if the camera is damaged or stolen, the memory chip is secure.
- Any new driver coming into the system must pay for the camera/shield themselves as the safety surcharge has been lifted (in 2003).
- In regard to manpower, there are three Inspectors who inspect all vehicles once per month. The safety devices are just one more item on their check list. There is a meter check twice per year and the camera system is checked at that time as well.
- The partial shield with side shield was the recommended shield as it is fully portable (easily installed and un-installed).
- The shield is not bullet proof. (In most cases, weapons used in assaults were blunt weapons such as a bottle, hammer or rock. In some cases a knife was used but no guns were reported).
- The shield has been approved by the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation and will be covered since it is a mandatory piece of equipment. The cameras are also covered by insurance. Additional insurance may be required to ensure all items are insured (Supplementary Policy). In regard to passenger liability, the shield has rounded corners and a padded back so it is not a danger to the passenger.
- An annual report is prepared for the Minister of Transportation by the Manitoba Taxi Cab Board.
- License fees for renewal of a taxi cab license is \$30.00. The license has been reduced in size (the license will now fit in a wallet) and posting the picture is no longer required. Most people who made a complaint did not remember or notice the taxi licence/number. Identification is on the licence plates (front and back) and on the dash (large number 3" high). There are no numbers on the roof lights, numbers are on the front fenders and rear bumper and the company name is on the door.
- One feature of the roof light is that the driver has the ability to make the light flash which would indicate he requires assistance. Drivers are trained on the safety features.
- There are approximately a dozen independent taxi operators who do not operate under a broker but they must still have all the safety features.
- There is a bright yellow decal that indicates there is a camera in use in the cab. There is a public information notice that explains the public's rights.

- There are a number of security features built into the memory chip: ie: installers cannot configure the camera.
- If a passenger requests the camera be turned off, the driver could cover the camera (with a hat or bag) but they are then placing themselves at risk.

The Committee agreed, at this time, to hear comments/questions from the public in relation to the safety devices. Mr. Kozubal responded to the questions from the public as follows:

- Regarding financing for the safety measures, the safety surcharge was introduced (\$0.25 on the meter) for a limited time to cover the cost of the safety devices. An estimate was done to determine how long it would take for the owner to recoup the cost. The owner was responsible for collecting/holding that money to cover the cost of the safety devices and the installation of the devices by the pre-determined deadline.
- Shields must be in place 24 hours per day. The side shield is optional so the side shield may be removed.
- The Newsletter was distributed to anyone in the industry (drivers, owners, brokers).
- If the police request the vehicle for forensics due to a crime the cab may be impounded and used as evidence for the period of time required by the police.
- Installation of shields in limousines would be the decision of the local Committee.

- Mr. Vince Garnier, Provincial Manager for the Nova Scotia Department of Labour, Occupational Health and Safety introduced himself and commended the Committee for their initiatives in regard to ensuring the safety of taxi drivers. He indicated that his department is offering assistance in regard to the health and safety of the taxi drivers and will assist with educational brochures etc. including assistance with the costs for those brochures.
- Mr. Tom Stroud, installer of the shields, also introduced himself.
- Shield installation is included in the cost for the shields.
- Mr. Vince Garnier, responding to a question from a member of the public, advised that in Nova Scotia, First Aid Kits are required to be in a vehicle if the vehicle is being used for commercial purposes.
- Approximately six side shields are in use in Winnipeg although most shields have a protruding side piece.
- Part of the driver training includes how to handle money such as not flashing the cash and making regular deposits during the day to reduce the amount of cash on hand (possibly half a day's session in the 45 hour training course).
- The webpage for Winnipeg Taxi Services is <http://www.gov.mb.ca/tgs/taxicab>.

- All fare increases require a public hearing (there was no public opposition to the \$0.25 surcharge and subsequent meter rate increase).

Mr. Kevin Hindle circulated an information package including a survey with information from thirteen jurisdictions across the country regarding safety systems that are in place. The information included Councillor Younger's request for the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee to provide a report to Regional Council on whether driver shields, cameras etc. should be required of taxi license holders and whether the security improvements should be voluntary or mandatory. HRM Staff contacted other major municipalities regarding taxi safety systems in their areas and the results may be viewed in Appendix B of the information package. During the research on the issue, it was suggested that the private sector company perspective be included. This information is contained in Appendix C of the report.

Mr. Hindle reviewed Appendix B at this time. Mr. Kozubal added that Thompson, Manitoba recently had a taxi driver killed and subsequently set up a taxi advisory committee that reviewed safety measures with the recommendation that safety measures be mandatory by June 2006.

The Committee commented that it appears cameras have been an effective method in deterring acts of violence against taxi drivers across the country. Mr. Hindle advised that acts of violence toward drivers in the city of Toronto dropped drastically with the introduction of mandatory cameras or GPS systems (shields were optional). The By-Law has been amended (in 2005) to state that by July 1, 2006 all three safety devices (emergency lights, cameras, and GPS Systems) will be mandatory in Toronto (shields will remain optional).

The safety surcharge may be used to cover the cost of all mandatory safety devices. The time frame for the surcharge could be determined by averaging the number of runs per day which could then be used to calculate how long it would take for an owner to recoup the cost of the safety devices. The \$0.25 surcharge was not to be split between owner/driver as revenue, the surcharge was solely for the safety devices.

Mr. Richards suggested that a tax be placed on homes in HRM to cover the cost of the safety devices rather than have the taxi drivers have to collect the money and pay out.

The Committee thanked Mr. Hindle and Mr. Kozubal for the pertinent information. No further action required at this time.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - February 09, 2006

Deferred to the next meeting.

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

4.1.1 Invited Guest, Mr. Jerry Kozubal, Winnipeg, Manitoba

This item was dealt with earlier in the meeting. See pages 3-8.

4.1.2 Presentation by Ms. Susan Bowers, A1 Advantage Systems

Ms. Bowers, A1 Advantage Systems, advised that she and her husband sell and install safety equipment and taxi meters. Ms. Bowers presented the shields (full shield and partial shield) and a camera for the Committee to view. Mr. Kozubal added that the partial shield is manufactured in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Ms. Bowers and her husband explained the function of the camera (Verify I) and responded to questions from the Committee.

- She advised that the cameras are installed by her company or the police and that no one is informed where the "black box" portion is located in the vehicle (only the installer will know the exact location).
- Only the installer and police would have the software to obtain information from the cameras.
- The memory chip can hold up to 2400 images, then will start over with images being written over the previous ones.
- The cameras may be set up to never erase and to have an emergency option where by the press of a panic button fifteen prior and post images will be locked in memory and will not be able to be erased.
- The cost for the cameras vary from \$850 for the Mark 3 (including installation) to \$1200 for the Mark 4.
- The Committee requested information on what cities are using this product. Ms. Bowers advised that she had provided that information to Mr. Kevin Hindle.

Ms. Bowers invited the Committee to accompany her outside to view the installation of the "bubble" shield in a vehicle.

The Committee called a fifteen minutes recess at 11:35 am.

Mr. Kevin Hindle left the meeting at 11:35 am.

Mr. Robert Richards left the meeting at 11:40 am.

The meeting reconvened at 11:50 am.

**4.2 Clarification re: In Camera Sessions - (Taxi Licenses - HRM Property)
Legislative Assistant to provide update.**

No update available.

5. NEW BUSINESS/ADDED ITEMS

5.1 NEW BUSINESS

5.1.1 Update From the Recent Training / Facilitated Session Regarding the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee's Workplan

Deferred to next meeting due to time constraints.

5.2 ADDED ITEMS

5.2.1 Update - Re-evaluating the National Taxi Standards

Ms. Darlene Grant Fiander advised that approximately thirty taxi drivers from HRM were involved with the process. A new National Certification Standard will soon be circulated as there have been some improvements. Recommendations came from industry input as well as information from across the country. Mr. Hindle and Mr. Kozubal were also in attendance at the three day event.

Mr. Harrison requested that the new National Certification Standard be circulated to the Committee when it becomes available.

5.2.2 Waiting Lists for Taxi Roof Lights

Mr. Derek Mathers advised that this matter could be deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints.

5.2.3 Certification of Limousine Drivers

This item was deferred to the next meeting as Mr. Richards was not in attendance at this time.

6. NOTICES OF MOTION

6.1 Take Notice that at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee on Thursday, April 13, 2006, I, Denis St. Laurent, intend to bring forward the motion to place a moratorium on the licensing of new drivers for the Halifax Zone.

7. MOTIONS - None

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Thursday, April 13, 2006 at 2:00 pm.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:01 pm.

Chris Newson
Legislative Assistant