

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

TAXI AND LIMOUSINE COMMITTEE MINUTES August 16, 2004

PRESENT: Councillor Stephen Adams
Councillor Ron Cooper
Donald Hatcher
Cal Demont
Don Shannon
Dave Withrow

ABSENT: Derek Mathers (regrets)
Bob Richards (regrets)
Jeffrey Rozee
Donald Swinimer

STAFF: Mr. Wayne Anstey, Municipal Solicitor
Mr. Dave Steele, Taxi Inspector
Mr. Kevin Hindle, Operations Coordinator
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Additions: 3.1 Presentation - Ken Hollingum - Rush Hour Media - Advertising on Taxi Cabs - *To be dealt with immediately following approval of the minutes.*

- 8.1 Resignation - Mr. Len Wilson
- 8.2 Transferability Sub-Committee - Mr. Don Shannon
- 8.3 New Appointments to Committee - Mr. David Withrow
- 8.4 Closing Driver Licensing - Mr. Don Shannon
- 8.5 Complaints
- 8.6 List of Incidents from Taxi Inspector

MOVED BY Mr. Don Shannon, seconded by Mr. David Withrow that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - June 21, 2004

MOVED by Mr. Don Shannon, seconded by Mr. Cal Demont that the minutes of the June 21, 2004 meeting of the Regional Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3.1 Presentation - Rush Hour Media - Advertising on Taxi Cabs

- A photograph of a rooflight with advertising (from a New Brunswick vehicle) was before the Committee for reference.

Mr. Ken Hollingum, Rush Hour Media, presented his proposal to incorporate advertising on taxi rooflights. He raised the following points:

- Shape and size of rooflight required by By-law T-108 would be adhered to.
- The manufacturer, Rush Hour Media, is located in St. Stephen, New Brunswick and all repairs/replacements would be done through that location.
- 25% of the advertising revenue would go to the cab owner, approximately \$300 per month.
- The cost of the light itself would be \$300.00.
- The proposed rooflight would replace the current rooflights and would contain the pertinent information such as rooflight number/name of the taxi company.
- There are only two shapes available for the taxi top ad carriers, one for a van and one

for a car.

Mr. Wayne Anstey, Municipal Solicitor, indicated an amendment to By-law T-108 would be required to allow for the advertising.

The members of the Committee raised the following points during the ensuing discussion:

- There are three zones in HRM and each zone has a slightly different shaped rooflight therefore, the uniform rooflight could cause confusion when trying to identify a cab. For example: if you say rooflight number 671, it would be difficult to know if it were a Halifax zone car or a County zone or a Dartmouth zone. Would be better to have three completely separate styles that would be easily recognizable. *Mr. Hollingum indicated the rooflight number could be placed on all four sides of the rooflight and the taxi company name would also be on the rooflight.*
- Currently, signs can be placed on the vehicle roof as long as it does not obstruct the roof light.
- Some drivers may not want the advertising even with the extra income.
- **Mr. Don Shannon suggested since contact had already been made with Mr. Withrow, the idea be promoted in Mr. Withrow's zone (Dartmouth) to see if it is wanted or not.** Then other zones could be checked for interest. We do not want to be put in the position that you must buy a \$300 rooflight and advertise.
- You will have two separate rooflights in each zone - those who will be advertising and those who will not - which means possibly six different rooflights in HRM. It will confuse the traveling public.

The Chair thanked Mr. Hollingum for his presentation.

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

4.1 Update - Taxi Driver Incidents

Consideration of this matter was **deferred** to the next meeting.

4.2 Transportation for Disabled Persons (report previously circulated at June 21 meeting)

- A copy of the HRM webpage information on Accessible Low Floor Buses was before the Committee.

Mr. Dave Withrow suggested it be ensured there is a sufficient number of accessible taxis before more taxi owner's/driver's licenses are issued. He commented since accessible taxis are able to; operate in any zone, sit on common stands and have no restrictions on licenses, there should be more than two accessible taxis in operation. Mr. Withrow commented if there are drivers complaining they are not getting enough calls to make a living, and the disabled

are wanting more taxi service, we have a problem. Concluding his remarks, Mr. Withrow suggested that HRM should stop issuing new owners licenses until more accessible taxis are operational.

The Chair advised accessible taxis/drivers were given every advantage but there was no demand for the accessible taxis. He added at one time there were four vans available, now there are only two and they are not able to make a go of it. What can this Committee recommend to fix this? He further advised there is a conference planned in the near future that will be held in Halifax involving disabled persons and accessible transportation may become an issue.

Mr. Don Shannon commended Regional Council for promoting accessible transportation through Metro Transit (low-floor buses, access-a-bus). Mr. Kevin Hindle, Operations Coordinator, Taxi & Limo Services, advised HRM has 48 low floor buses and 18 Access-a-buses. The Access-a-buses have a waiting list of 25-40 clients per day and cannot meet the demand. Councillor Adams inquired why the 25-40 clients on the waiting list do not use the accessible taxi. Mr. Hindle indicated the accessible taxi is booked transporting patients to and from the QEII Health Sciences Centre. Further, the accessible taxi is off the road at 6:00 pm each evening and does not work on weekends. The second accessible taxi is not in operation at the moment as it is awaiting repairs (transmission).

Mr. Shannon asked if this Committee could encourage the owner of the accessible taxi to have both accessible taxis back on the road as this Committee is receiving information that there is a demand and a need that is not being met. The Chair responded the Committee cannot mandate what the owner must do.

A member of the public, with permission of the Chair, commented if he were to subsidize his van in order to take disabled passengers and was also able to use it for common calls as well, he is ready to sign up.

The Chair explained another problem raised during the December meeting with representatives of the Persons with Disabilities Committee was that many drivers in the industry will not take guide dogs/wheelchairs. He suggested members of the industry (taxi) have to look at themselves as some drivers are refusing to take people with disabilities. The disabled are not guaranteed to have taxi service but they will get service with an accessible taxi.

MOVED BY Mr. David Withrow, seconded by Mr. Don Shannon that a letter be prepared by the Taxi Inspector and the Regional Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee as a friendly reminder to be sent to all major brokers that there is an upcoming conference involving disabled persons. Further, that all drivers be aware it is in violation of the by-law to refuse pick-up of wheelchair passengers unless there

is a letter on file in the Taxi Inspector's Office.

Mr. Kevin Hindle advised the taxi industry will only be able to transport approximately 2% of the people coming into town as the majority will have to be transported in their wheelchair by the Access-a-bus. Further, once you become accessible, you are under the guidelines of the MVA (Motor Vehicles Act) and must abide by their standards as well.

Mr. Don Shannon added the drivers would have to be further qualified to operate the accessible taxis as they will have to know how to lift and transport the individuals. What happens if a driver wrenches his/her back? The Chair responded there will be a ramp to lift the wheelchair into the van. He further suggested some members of the industry (taxi) need to be educated on the issue of transporting disabled persons.

Mr. Don Hatcher suggested **an information sheet be attached to the letter to the brokers regarding what the drivers will be expected to do.** If some drivers are refusing to take people with disabilities then we should hand out an educational piece and indicate that this Committee has reviewed the issue and are taking action on it. Refer to the by-law (T-108) and the discussion here tonight. Indicate when the event will be and that the service is required.

A member of the public, with permission of the Chair, inquired why HRM does not simply bring in more accessible buses to service that event. Why is the taxi industry being held accountable for this service? It is not our problem.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4.3 Numbering of Buildings/Homes

No update available at this time.

5. **GOOD NEWS STORIES** - None

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

6.1 Mandatory National Certification for all HRM Taxi and Limousine Drivers

- A report dated May 10, 2004 from the Hotel Standards Committee to Regional Council was before the Committee.

The Committee raised the following points during the ensuing discussion:

- Response from drivers is: "What am I getting from this (training)?" "Who am I giving my \$150 to?" "I get a pin and am told to shower and wear a collared shirt". "I am not getting anything for my money".

- Drivers think they will not increase their business, only increase TIANS' coffers.
- If this goes through Council, there will be A LOT of questions.
- Experienced drivers (20 years service or more) comment they can drive circles around the newly certified and question why the new drivers are being put to a higher standard simply because they are nationally certified. (*National Certification is obtained upon completion of the course in a time frame of one year and a day*)
- Certification course should be offered for \$50 through the Taxi Inspector's office.
- Mandatory National Certification is being kicked over and under this commission by the Hotel Standards Committee. The first attempt was sent to Regional Council and Regional Council referred it back to the Taxi Committee.

Councillor Adams advised the report was sent as an information item to the Taxi Committee before being sent to Regional Council.

- National Certification has not been promoted to the point that the drivers fully understand and agree upon it. The drivers do not see the advantage.
- The cost of the course is secondary - the justification for the proposal is about the money - TIANS - are we keeping them afloat?

The Chair advised National Certification is for more than taxi drivers, it is for a variety of service providers and it is not TIANS way of making money. He added other service industry providers such as front desk staff, pay more for the course than cab drivers do. HANS and TIANS subsidize the course for the taxi industry only.

Mr. Shannon commented the money is not the primary issue, **the issue is what is the goal.** Make this an easy sell to the drivers - you are snubbing the drivers by it coming from the Hotel Standards Committee.

Councillor Adams suggested the Committee ask for an opportunity to meet with the Hotel Standards Committee before the report goes back to Regional Council, invite the Hotel Standards Committee here or go to them.

MOVED BY Mr. Don Shannon, seconded by Mr. Cal Demont that the Regional Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee meet with the Hotel Standards Committee to discuss the rationale behind Mandatory Certification. Further, that the report not be brought forward to Regional Council until after this meeting has taken place.

The Chair responded to the Committee and members of the public indicating the Hotel Standards Committee meetings **are** open to the public and they could attend the next meeting scheduled for Thursday, September 2nd, 9:00 am at the Radisson Suite Hotel, Hollis Street. *Committee members and members of the public indicated they would be attending the next*

Hotel Standards Committee meeting.

A discussion paper (information report) is to be prepared following the joint meeting.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

A member of the public, with permission of the Chair, raised the issue of lack of enforcement of the Hotel Standards. **The Chair requested the issue of Enforcement be added to the Hotel Standards Committee agenda.**

Mr. Shannon asked why HRM does not take the initiative to put money in the Taxi Inspectors budget to increase enforcement rather than put it in TIANS coffers. With additional funding, the Taxi Inspector could get an extra body, an extra car, have an extra ticket book. HRM should put that money (National Certification Program fee) to where there could be some use and the drivers would see it.

Councillor Adams explained an attempt was made to increase licensing fees in order to provide for increased By-Law enforcement but the provincial agency would not entertain any changes to the Motor Vehicle Act.

Mr. Don Hatcher commented there is a lot of value to National Certification. There are ISO businesses around the world, it is an enhancement for our society, we are more global now, we are ensuring additional quality service for our community. He added he does not agree with the certification being mandatory. There should be more leeway for senior drivers. He **suggested a grandfather clause for those with 25 years service or more.**

The Chair commented certification is a customer service issue. It is a National Certification program, a national standard and is offered across the country. Physicians, and other professionals are updated every year at least. You have to have some pride in your industry.

A member of the public, with permission of the Chair, commented many new drivers who service the cruise ships do not know where they are going in the city but they are certified and have their pin. Also, many "certified" drivers are not properly dressed. One car was told by a Hotel employee it was not suitable to go to the airport. To have the certification (Hotel Standards) is to be able to know where you are going and meet the dress requirements.

The Chair suggested a motion be made and forwarded to the Hotel Standards Committee regarding this issue. Further, anyone wishing to attend the next Hotel Standards Committee meeting should prepare their comments and present them at that time.

MOVED BY Mr. Don Shannon, seconded by Mr. Cal Demont that members of the Regional Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee as well as members of the public

in attendance, expressed grave concern that individuals (taxi drivers) were on a hotel stand without proper attire and that those who were first in line were not given first opportunity for fares. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The result of a later discussion with the Chair of the Hotel Standards Committee, Mr. Bill Harrison, regarding the attendance of additional persons at the next regular meeting of the Hotel Standards Committee, determined that a larger venue would be required to accommodate members of the public and members of the Regional Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee. Further, it was decided that a special joint meeting of the two Committees be held to discuss the issue of Mandatory National Certification for all HRM Taxi and Limousine Drivers. With the agreement of Councillor Steve Adams, Chair of the Regional Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee, the date set for the joint meeting was August 30, 2004 from 6:00 - 8:00 pm.

7. MOTIONS

7.1 Limousines - Bob Richards

MOVED BY Mr. Dave Withrow, seconded by Mr. Don Hatcher that this item be deferred until Mr. Richards is able to be in attendance. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7.2 Membership on Taxi and Limousine Committee - Dave Withrow

Mr. David Withrow expressed concern with lack of attendance by some members of the Committee. The Chair indicated the attendance of Mr. Rozee and Mr. Swinimer will be verified and if it is found they have missed three consecutive meetings without regrets, they can be removed from the Committee.

MOVED BY Mr. David Withrow, seconded by Mr. Don Shannon that this item be deferred until a discussion is held with TIANS and the Hotel Standards Committee. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Resignation

The Committee accepted the resignation of Mr. Len Wilson.

8.2 Transferability Sub-Committee

It was determined that members of the Committee have not received the draft copy of the document. Mr. Len Wilson was to prepare the report and then meet with Mr. Anstey. Mr. Wilson has since resigned.

Mr. Don Shannon added there should be transferability as a Compassionate Clause. The Sub-Committee got bogged down with the proposal that we should be able to get up to five (5) licenses each. He further suggested one or both members of Council attend the Sub-Committee meetings on Transferability as we need to have Councils' concerns there.

MOVED BY Councillor Cooper, seconded by Mr. Don Hatcher that the material be gathered from Mr. Wilson and distributed to the Committee and Mr. Anstey as soon as possible. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. *(Upon a later discussion with Mr. Wilson, he indicated he would prefer someone from the Committee pick-up the information from him. Mr. Dave Withrow agreed to obtain the information from Mr. Wilson).*

Mr. Dave Withrow advised he intends to give a **NOTICE OF MOTION.** *(See Item 9.1, page 11).*

8.3 New Appointments to Committee

Mr. Dave Withrow commented there has been poor attendance by some members and the Committee has never met at capacity. He suggested *ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED* be put on the application form. Further, the Membership Selection Committee should consider attendance when appointing members. The Chair will **forward the suggestion to the Membership Selection Committee that attendance is required and that members should be encouraged to attend.**

8.4 Closing Driver Licensing

Mr. Don Shannon indicated three meetings ago he put a motion on floor to have a moratorium to limit testing for two years. There was no seconder but my concern is why would you increase a workforce? A member of the public, with permission of the Chair, raised the following concerns: his earnings are down 30%, there are too many drivers and the situation is getting worse by 5 or 10% every month. He added we cannot wait thirty days to stop testing. The Chair requested clarification on the number of tests done each month. Mr. Steele indicated there are 30 tests per month for HRM with an approximate pass rate of only 50%. The Chair advised there is a process to follow regarding a notice of motion and the issue will be discussed at the next meeting. **Mr. Shannon presented his NOTICE OF MOTION - see item 9.2, page 11.**

8.5 Complaints

Mr. Steele advised a list is being prepared and should be available for the next meeting. **The Committee requested the following information be included: specifics of complaint and what action was taken.**

8.6 List of Incidents from Dave Steele's Office

Dave Steele indicated the information will be available for the next meeting.

9. NOTICES OF MOTION

9.1 TAKE NOTICE THAT AT the next meeting of the Regional Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee : Halifax Regional Taxi owners licenses in all zones having a leasing or mortgage agreement pursuant to the By-law T-108 the following; having completed the agreement between the vendor or leasee concerning the conditional sale or right of purchase or mortgage of the taxi owners license issued to the vendor shall be transferred to either party. Mr. Dave Withrow. The Chair commented the vehicle is leased not the licenses.

9.2 TAKE NOTICE THAT AT the next meeting of the TAXI AND LIMOUSINE Committee I will put forward an amendment to By-law T-108 to prohibit the issuance of new divers license for a period of two years. Mr. Don Shannon

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Monday, September 20, 2004

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Chris Newson
Legislative Assistant