

**Taxicab Board Meeting Minutes
April 18, 2013**

Members Present: Sarah Singleton Michael Benson
 Stephen Kunselman Robert Goeddel
 Tom Crawford

Members Absent: Eric Sturgis

Guests:

Rick Clark, Amazing Blue Taxi
Ryan Vu, American Cabs
Aamer Jumaa, The Big Blue Taxi
Fiaz Shah, Metro Ways Cab
Farhan Khan, American Cabs
Mark LaSarge, Select Ride/Yellow Car
Officer Jamie Adkins, Ann Arbor Police

I. CALLED TO ORDER – 8:20 a.m.

**Mr. Benson moved to call the meeting to order, seconded by Mr. Goeddel.
The motion passed.**

II. PUBLIC COMMENTARY

- a. Rick Clark, Amazing Blue Taxi
Discussed deregulating taxicab rates
- b. Mark LaSarge, Select Ride
Discussed deregulating taxicab rates

III. OLD BUSINESS

**Mr. Goeddel moved to approve the Board minutes from February 28, 2013,
Mr. Benson seconded. The motion passed.**

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Aamer Jumaa, Big Blue Taxi – Taxicab Company License
Mr. Kunselman said the Board received a letter of opposition from another company that felt Big Blue Taxi's name and color is similar to their. Tom Crawford stated that staff has recommended denial of the application for a company license. Officer Adkins said in addition to the similar name, there are other issues that need to be address such as hours of operations and an additional phone number. The company would also need an additional drivers if

they are going to operate 24 hours. The vehicle is currently licensed as a limousine.

Mr. Benson moved to deny the Big Blue Taxi's application for a company license, Mr. Goeddel seconded. The motion passed.

b. Fiaz Shah, Metro Ways Cab – Taxicab Company License

Officer Adkins stated that the company is operating out of New Boston, MI. They plan to operate 24/7 and have provided all necessary documentation. Currently, the city has company licenses for four other companies named "Metro", i.e. Metro Cab, Metro Airport Taxicab, Metro Star, and Metro Ann Arbor. In addition, some of the cabs have the same color. The Ordinance states the company's vehicles must be distinctive.

Mr. Benson moved to deny Metro Ways Cab's application for a company license, Mr. Goeddel seconded. The motion passed.

c. Ryan Vu, American Cabs – Taxicab Company License

Officer Adkins said all documents are in order. The company operates out of Dexter, MI. They plan to operate with two drivers, 24/7. The company is applying for a new web address/name.

Mr. Goeddel moved to approve American Cabs' application for a company license, Mr. Benson seconded. The motion passed.

d. Taxicab Meeting Minutes Detail

Tom Crawford discussed revising the way the meeting minutes are captured. Currently, the Taxicab Board meeting minutes are very long and detailed. Many of the Boards and Commissions minutes are more action oriented. The matter has come up over the years as to whether we should keep this style of minutes or not. The minutes, as they are, seem to be somewhat beneficial because the Board revisits the same issue occasionally. The City is making an effort to put all the Board and Commission into Legistar, a software application accessible through the city's website, so information can be searched and obtained easily. In doing so, we're investigating having not only action minutes but also audio of the meeting attached in Legistar. Another option would be to move the meetings to council chambers and have it videotaped by CTN.

Mr. Kunselman said most of our meetings don't have lengthy minutes. He agreed the minutes do not have to be verbatim, but as Mr. Crawford pointed out, it has been useful to capture discussion and concerns and if we are posting them to Legistar, it is a great opportunity for public review. Mr. Kunselman also said since the Board is approving taxicab company applications that are not going to council, it is important that we have a good record of the discussion as to why something was denied or approved.

Mr. Benson said since he has been on the Board, most of the minutes have been brief. For the rare instances when we do have longer discussion, having more detail would be useful for future Boards.

Mr. Crawford said we will proceed with getting the minutes into Legistar as directed by management.

e. Taxicab Deregulation and Rate History

Staff handed out a packet with comparison rates in other communities as well as Ann Arbor's rate increase history. Mr. Crawford said discussion of taxicab deregulation is a topic that comes up every couple of years. In the comparison, Ann Arbor's rates are at the high end compared to other communities. In looking at our rate history, rates have continued to increase practically every year since 2000. In the last resolution to council to increase rates sent in 2011, gas per gallon was over \$4.00. The memo asked council not to increase rate again unless gas prices rose to \$5.00 per gallon for two consecutive months. Since that time, gas has gone down but rates have stayed the same.

Mr. Crawford asked for an understanding of what type of deregulations the taxicab companies desire; deregulating rates only or full deregulation which could allow the company to operate without restriction. It is staff's belief that the intent of the discussion really only focuses on rates. As the Board considers deregulation, some of the concerns that have come up in the past were setting a higher rate or maximum rate. In addition, rates should be posted on the outside of the vehicle and the taxicab companies would be responsible for cost associated with rates changes by returning to the city to have the meter resealed.

One of the benefits of how the Ordinance is organized is require companies to operate 24/7 or they have to limited their time to certain hours and advertise the hours that way. The ordinance also seeks to balance a fair compensation with a safe and decent quality of service. Mr. Crawford believes there are some risks to deregulation.

Mr. Kunselman said the purpose of having a set meter rate is to discourage haggling. Mr. Kunselman said one subject that was of interest to him was charging higher rates at peak times such as bar time to encourage competition or more availability. He is interested in having a different meter rate during peak times. He asked staff to look into how a surcharge during peak times is working in other communities.

Mr. Benson said that we should look into the cost of doing business as well to determine rates. He is not opposed to considering other things, but there are intermediate steps the Board could take such as setting a regular schedule to review the rates. He also said it would be helpful to know from the companies what they consider to be a reasonable rate.

Mr. Crawford said from past history in discussing rates and deregulation, we often hear from the companies and not the customers. It's often discussed how to make the companies more profitable. We want a healthy taxicab industry in the city but we have to be fair to the citizens and look back at the analysis and think at what point does something else have to give beside us just giving more revenue to the cab companies.

The Board asked that staff look into surcharges during bar time or from 11p.m. to 3a.m. and also look into best practices in other communities for posting rates and hailing cabs.

V. Administrator Comments

Due to the changes in Board members, the Board currently does not have a vice-chair. The Board agreed to have election of officers at the next Board meeting.

Mr. Crawford also said a permanent time for the board meeting needs to be set.

Mr. Benson made a motion to permanently change the Taxicab Board Meeting time to 8:30 a.m. on the 4th Thursday of each month. Mr. Goeddel seconded. The motion passed.

Mr. Kunselman asked if there have been any issues in enforcement of taxicabs since the last meeting. Officer Adkins said things have been quiet.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTARY

1. Rick Clark, Amazing Blue Taxi

Mr. Clark requested a copy of the rate history

2. Mark LaSarge, Select Ride

Mr. LaSarge said the detailed minutes are very important and helpful. Also strongly suggest the Board consider deregulation of rates.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Benson moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Goeddel seconded. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 a.m.