

Taxicab Board Meeting Minutes  
September 26, 2013

Members Present: Michael Benson                      Robert Goeddel  
                         Stephen Kunselman                      Eric Sturgis (left after 9:04)  
                         Tom Crawford                                      LouAnne Bullington

Members Absent: None

Guests:

Officer Jamie Adkins  
Rick Clark, Amazing Blue Taxi  
Aamer Jumaa, Enter Taxi Cab  
Gordon Berry

I. CALLED TO ORDER – 8:37 a.m. by Mr. Benson.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTARY  
None

III. Approval of Agenda

Changes were made to the agenda. Enter Taxicab company license approval was moved to Old Business.

**Mr. Kunselman moved to approve the agenda, Mr. Sturgis seconded. The motion passed.**

IV. OLD BUSINESS

1. Approval of Minutes

**Mr. Sturgis moved to approve the Board Minutes of June 27, 2013, seconded by Mr. Goeddel. The motion passed.**

2. Taxicab Company License Approval – Enter Taxicab

Officer Adkins said there were a couple of misdemeanors pending against Mr. Jumaa in violation of the city ordinance. In July, she received an update from city attorney Robert West in reference to the violations stating that Mr. Jumaa pled guilty to not having a taxicab drivers license and having an unlicensed taxicab. A fine of \$300 was paid. In addition, Officer Adkins spoke with Mr. Sheikh from AJ Taxi who said he knows Mr. Jumaa, but does not know him very well. They used to be neighbors in Ypsilanti. He also know that he is

from Iraq. Mr. Jumaa asked him for a job once but Mr. Sheikh was running only one cab at that time.

Officer Adkins said Mr. Jumaa is still operating as a limo but has not changed his graphic back to Big Blue Limousine. The vehicle is currently called "Enter Cab".

Mr. Sturgis asked Mr. Jumaa to tell him about what he has done the last three months in regards to the concerns the Board had at the last meeting. He asked if he was enrolled in any classes or anything along those lines. Mr. Jumaa said he is going to classes at ESL.

Mr. Benson asked Mr. Jumaa if he has stopped to pick up customers without them calling ahead to set up a ride. Mr. Benson repeated the question three times. Mr. Jumaa was not able to answer because he said he did not understand the question.

Mr. Crawford said the approval for this company license has come before the Board at the last three meetings. He asked that a motion be made to approve or deny the license. Mr. Jumaa was asked if he had any final questions for the Board. His response could not be translated.

Mr. Kunselman said in the past the Board has allowed conditional approval. Mr. Crawford does remember allowing a condition for approval by allowing the driver to operate unless they received another violation.

Mr. Sturgis said the Board has done Mr. Jumaa a disservice. He apologized for postponing the decision at the last meeting. Mr. Jumaa has attempted to go to ESL and tried to comply with the Board and now the Board is doing what they were going to do three months ago. Because of this, he will not vote against him. He has done what the Board has asked him to do. The Board should have been more specific in what they were asking Mr. Jumaa to accomplish. Mr. Sturgis said he cannot vote against him in good conscious.

Ms. Bullington disagreed. She said the Board gave Mr. Jumaa three extra months to work on his English rather than denying him immediately. She agreed that Mr. Jumaa is working on it, but is not there yet. Mr. Jumaa can come back before the Board when his English gets better. Mr. Kunselman agreed that everyone should be given a chance and Mr. Jumaa was not immediately denied at the first meeting and was given an opportunity to take English classes. Mr. Jumaa is making an effort and he can always come back before the Board. Mr. Kunselman said that the Board should be aware that Mr. Jumaa is still a limo driver that may be acting like a taxi. Mr. Kunselman said he is willing to deny for six months and suggested that Mr. Jumaa keep taking the English classes. He explained to Mr. Jumaa that it is important not to operate in the city as a taxi while he is a limo and stated that

the distinction between the two is very important in our community. Mr. Kunselman said they want Mr. Jumaa to be in compliance as a taxi driver but because of public safety he has to be able to speak enough English so that the customer can understand. He asked Mr. Jumaa if he thought six months would be enough time to improve. Mr. Jumaa said he is trying to learn to translate (or understand) English (some of Mr. Jumaa's response was not understood).

**Mr. Kunselman moved to amend the earlier motion to deny the company license for six months. The motion was withdrawn.**

Ms. Bullington said for someone who has been taking cabs in the community for 21 years, it is extremely important for someone who has a disability such as visual impairment to be understood. If a passenger gives the driver an address and they end up at the wrong stop and don't know where they are, they could be put in danger. It is important that the driver understands English really well. Ms. Bullington said she was taken to the wrong location more than once.

Mr. Benson said the first postponement was because Officer Adkins was not able to attend the meeting with the necessary update the Board needed to make a decision. Although, that did give the Board the opportunity to encourage Mr. Jumaa to do a few things as well as other issues that were pending that have since been resolved. Mr. Benson still has concerns about the allegation that was dropped regarding the "kissing" and then a second allegation of Mr. Jumaa kissing another customer. That really speaks to the maturity and professionalism or the lack thereof, said Mr. Benson. He thinks Mr. Jumaa's language skills are improving and commended him; but given the demographics of the city, a driver or company owner who can hire additional driver and set standards for their company, communication skills are extremely important. Setting a standard of professionalism is extremely important as well. Given the current motion on the floor, he will likely be supporting Mr. Goedel's motion to deny the request.

Mr. Sturgis asked about the charges being dropped against Mr. Jumaa. Officer Adkins said charges were dropped because they could not get a hold of the student because school was out for the summer. The Board was presented with several letters from people supporting Mr. Jumaa.

Ms. Bullington said she has a major concern with inappropriate contact. There were two alleged incidents that occurred. One charge was dropped but the second incident was proven.

Officer Adkins said about a year ago there was an issue with a taxi driver asking for a kiss or trying to give a kiss to a passenger. That taxicab driver was removed and charged. She believes that there may be some cultural

issues and misunderstanding; however, in licensing taxis and companies, we have an obligation to protect the population and set standards. This situation does not meet the standard that the Board has set forth since she has been involved from an administrative standpoint.

Mr. Sturgis said he will be voting against approval of the company license because of public safety but he stands by his earlier comments and believe the Board did not read Mr. Jumaa's letters or gave him the service.

**Mr. Goeddel move to deny the company license for Enter Taxicab, seconded by Ms. Bullington. A vote was taken and the roll called as follows: Michael Benson, Robert Goeddel, Eric Sturgis, LouAnne Bullington, Stephen Kunselman - the motion passed unanimously.**

## V. NEW BUSINESS

### 1. New Site for Taxicab Stands

Mr. Kunselman said the DDA controls the loading zone designations as part of the contract with the city for parking. They are willing to work with the city to determine whether or not we can take the existing loading zones and make them dual purpose. Most loading zone restrictions are from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. After that, they become free parking for the general public. With dual purpose use, we can turn them into taxicab stands. The DDA asked that staff/Taxi Board draw up a site plan for taxicab stands and forward it to them for consideration.

Mr. Crawford said that some loading zones are in places that are no longer needed. The traffic control order needed for the loading zones has to be done by the city but the DDA is the primary spokesperson for downtown. Mr. Crawford suggested the Board solicit the industry on where they would like the stands to be. Those suggestions would be sent to the DDA.

Mr. Goeddel said he would like to see a map of where the currently loading zones and taxicab stands are located. He would also like to know how often they are used or if they are fully utilized. Mr. Crawford said after expiration of the loading zone hours, there are frequent attempt to park there. Depending on the signage, some are no parking anything zones.

Mr. Benson asked about creating taxi stands in an area other than a loading zone. Mr. Crawford said it may be more beneficial asking the industry where they would like taxi stands. The DDA was asked two years ago about a taxi stand on Main Street and their preference at the time was to have use parking on Main Street and taxi stands off of Main Street on the side streets.

Mr. Benson said he has heard concerns that the area around the bars has two to three deep cabs that are blocking the street. He feels the more taxicab stands we have the better. An important part of that is signage. The signs that we currently have are very discreet. He would like to find out what options are available to make those more visible.

Mr. Benson said the next step would be to solicit the industry. Mr. Crawford said he would have his assistant email the taxicab companies to provide input on where they feel the taxi stands should be. Mr. Clark from Amazing Blue Taxi asked that a map of the current locations be attached in the email for input on taxi stands. Ms. Bullington asked for police input as well, if any.

## 2. Taxicab Deregulation

Mr. Benson said at our last meeting the Board discussed various types of deregulation or changes such as adding geographic and time type zones. Mr. Crawford said at the last meeting he would be willing to try some type of deregulation. Mr. Benson proposed that this issue be moved from the agenda in the near future one way or the other. Mr. Benson asked Mr. Crawford to bring a resolution to the Board at the next meeting. Mr. Crawford said a plan is needed to deregulate. We need to figure out what we are trying to accomplish and be able to measure whether it was successful or not. Also, we need to look at what would be the right time of year. Mr. Crawford is not certain if we can legally deregulate because we are currently charged with setting taxicab rates. He is not opposed to trying something but it is not an effort that would be accomplished within a month or two. Currently, the Finance service area is down five key employees, so this would be difficult for him to work on within the next six to eight months.

Mr. Benson asked the member of the Board to decide how or to what degree they would want to deregulate taxicabs and readdress the issue within a month or two. If there is a consensus, staff will be asked to come up with a way to implement the idea.

VI. Administrator Comments  
None

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTARY  
None

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kunselman moved to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Bullington seconded. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 9:22 a.m.