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May 15, 2010

Mayor Bill Euille and Members of City Council
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(hand delivered)

Dear Mayor Euille;

As Alexandria taxi cab owner-operators we are deeply troubled by the recent consideration of an overhaul of the city's taxi code.

First, we are troubled by the process that resulted in these recommendations. There are three key components to the industry: companies (dispatchers), consumers and owner-operators. Owner-operators, in our capacity as owner-operators were not party to the months of conversation that resulted in the proposal under current consideration. At this point, we strongly urge that the matter be tabled until there is an opportunity for full driver involvement.

Second, the current code was crafted during three years of deliberations that fully involved the city and the three legs of the taxi industry – owners (dispatchers), consumers and owner-operators. It attempted to balance the interests of each sector of the industry. There may, indeed, be some areas where it can be improved. However, the current proposal severely undercuts several fundamental pillars of the code. Specifically, the right to movement by drivers is threatened by recommendations: #1, #3,#4,#6,#7,#8,#9,#10. To provide, historical context, until the code was in 2005 drivers were essentially bound to work for the company with which they were affiliated. Drivers had very few rights and worked at the will of companies. The most profound change of the 2005 law – driver movement – will be severely limited by 8 of the proposed 13 changes to the code. The 2005 taxi code represent a compromise in which owner-operators made significant concessions primarily to win movement and control of our certificates; the proposal under consideration rolls back 'freedom of movement' almost to its pre-2005 status.

The biggest failure of the 2005 taxi code was the requirement of 2 calls per / driver / day. There is quite simply not enough business to warrant that high a level of dispatch calls. It is well documented that at least 50% of all taxi trips made by Alexandria owner-operators originate from National Airport. The post-9/11 shut down of National Airport vividly demonstrated this fact. However, if consideration is given for trips originating off taxi stands or flags or trips returning to Alexandria then there may be enough business to warrant a 2 Alexandria trips / driver / day code provision.

We urge that staff table consideration of these major changes by City Council until drivers are fully consulted. Furthermore, efforts to limit driver movement will return the taxi industry to its unfair and dysfunctional pre-2005 state. We as drivers are firmly committed to maintaining a system that respects drivers' right to move. As such, we request that Council instruct staff to table consideration of these changes until at least September, 2010 and that taxi owner-operators be involved in all discussions concerning modifications of the taxi code.

Sincerely,

R. Stephens
#867 Union Cab



C. Dohdy
#724 Union Cab

Cc: James Hartmann, City Manager

SPEAKER'S FORM

DOCKET ITEM NO. 2

2m

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND GIVE IT TO THE CITY CLERK
BEFORE YOU SPEAK ON A DOCKET ITEM

PLEASE ANNOUNCE THE INFORMATION SPECIFIED BELOW PRIOR TO SPEAKING.

1. NAME: RANDY STEPHENS

2. ADDRESS: 5610 Bloomfield DR #2

TELEPHONE NO. 7-501-3431 EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

3. WHOM DO YOU REPRESENT, IF OTHER THAN YOURSELF? TAXI CAB DRIVERS

4. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION ON THE ITEM?
FOR: _____ AGAINST: X OTHER: _____

5. NATURE OF YOUR INTEREST IN ITEM (PROPERTY OWNER, ATTORNEY, LOBBYIST, CIVIC INTEREST, ETC.):

6. ARE YOU RECEIVING COMPENSATION FOR THIS APPEARANCE BEFORE COUNCIL?
YES _____ NO X

This form shall be kept as a part of the permanent record in those instances where financial interest or compensation is indicated by the speaker.

A maximum of three minutes will be allowed for your presentation, except that one officer or other designated member speaking on behalf of each *bona fide* neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association desiring to be heard on a docket item shall be allowed five minutes. In order to obtain five minutes, you must identify yourself as a designated speaker, and identify the neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association you represent, at the start of your presentation. If you have a prepared statement, please leave a copy with the Clerk.

Additional time not to exceed 15 minutes may be obtained with the consent of the majority of the council present; provided notice requesting additional time with reasons stated is filed with the City Clerk in writing before 5:00 p.m. of the day preceding the meeting.

The public normally may speak on docket items only at public hearing meetings, and not at regular legislative meetings. Public hearing meetings are usually held on the Saturday following the second Tuesday in each month; regular legislative meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays in each month. The rule with respect to when a person may speak to a docket item at a legislative meeting can be waived by a majority vote of council members present but such a waiver is not normal practice. When a speaker is recognized, the rules of procedures for speakers at public hearing meetings shall apply. If an item is docketed *for public hearing* at a regular legislative meeting, the public may speak to that item, and the rules of procedures for speakers at public hearing meetings shall apply.

In addition, the public may speak on matters which are not on the docket during the Public Discussion Period at public hearing meetings. The mayor may grant permission to a person, who is unable to participate in public discussion at a public hearing meeting for medical, religious, family emergency or other similarly substantial reasons, to speak at a regular legislative meeting. When such permission is granted, the rules of procedures for public discussion at public hearing meetings shall apply.

Guidelines for the Public Discussion Period

(a) All speaker request forms for the public discussion period must be submitted by the time the item is called by the city clerk.

(b) No speaker will be allowed more than three minutes; except that one officer or other designated member speaking on behalf of each *bona fide* neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association desiring to be heard during the public discussion period shall be allowed five minutes. In order to obtain five minutes, you must identify yourself as a designated speaker, and identify the neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association you represent, at the start of your presentation.

(c) If more speakers are signed up than would be allotted for in 30 minutes, the mayor will organize speaker requests by subject or position, and allocated appropriate times, trying to ensure that speakers on unrelated subjects will also be allowed to speak during the 30 minute public discussion period.

(d) If speakers seeking to address council on the same subject cannot agree on a particular order or method that they would like the speakers to be called on, the speakers shall be called in the chronological order of their request forms' submission.

(e) Any speakers not called during the public discussion period will have the option to speak at the conclusion of the meeting, after all docketed items have been heard.