



## Vehicle for Hire Licensing Board

**Wednesday, August 14, 2024, 5:30 PM, Sharon Bushor Conf. Room, City Hall, 149 Church St.**

### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/91888002263?pwd=ygwULchEaxQeFDWWGdnlSgvnyNQLCC.1>

Meeting ID: 918 8800 2263

Passcode: 113206

### One tap mobile

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## 1. Agenda

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1.1. Motion to amend/adopt agenda

## 2. Previous Minutes

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2.1. Approval of previous minutes

File Attachments

1. Draft Minutes 07.11.24

Draft Minutes 07.11.24.pdf

## 3. Public Forum

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3.1. PUBLIC FORUM - Verbal Comments

## 4. Annual Board Report to City Council

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4.1. Annual Board Report to City Council

File Attachments

4.1. Draft Annual Board Report to City Council

## 5. New Business

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## **6. Adjournment**

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### **6.1. Motion to adjourn**



**BURLINGTON VEHICLE FOR HIRE LICENSING BOARD  
SHARON BUSHOR CONFERENCE ROOM, CITY HALL, 149 CHURCH ST.  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
July 11, 2024**

**Draft**

**Members Present: Paul Hines  
Stephen Hamlin  
Youness Jamil**

**Also Present: Hayley McClenahan  
Tenzin Chokden**

**Meeting start time: 05:36 P.M**

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## **1. Agenda**

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### **1. Agenda**

#### **1.1. Motion to amend/adopt agenda**

Motion to accept the agenda by Stephen Hamlin, seconded by Youness Jamil.  
Approved unanimously.

## **2. Approve Minutes**

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### **2. Approve Minutes**

#### **2.1. Approval of 05/30/24 Minutes**

Motion to accept the previous minutes by Stephen Hamlin, seconded by Youness Jamil.  
Approved unanimously.

## **3. Public Forum**

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### **3. Public Forum**

#### **3.1. PUBLIC FORUM - Verbal Comments**

No members of the public commented.

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## 4. Hearings

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### 4.1. Ride Easy Taxi

Hayley McClenahan swore in Aziz Bakkali, the complainant, via Zoom. She also swore in Saadi AlJarah, the driver of Ride Easy Taxi, and Ali AlJarah, the business owner of Ride Easy Taxi.

Ali AlJarah stated he is representing Saadi AlJarah who is his father, and also serves as a translator for Saadi AlJarah, who doesn't speak English.

Due to poor cell reception hindering the video conference, the board paused the hearing to allow Aziz Bakkali to find a more suitable location. The board decided to move on to item #6, New business, and discuss the vehicle for hire ordinance change proposal that was discussed with the airport commission at their meeting on Tuesday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The board acknowledged the written complaint but noted the complainant's absence from the hearing following a 5-minute recess. Due to this absence, the complainant's right to a hearing was waived.

Youness Jamil asked if it is legal to allow Ali AlJarah to translate for Saadi.

Hayley McClenahan advised it is up to the board's comfort, if the board wants to request a separate interpreter then the meeting will need to be rescheduled.

Paul Hines hears no objections from the board and will hear from the respondents first.

Ali AlJarah stated that he did not receive the full complaint and therefore he needs more time to review to respond.

A copy of the full complaint was provided and time allowed for review.

In a resumed video conference, Aziz Bakkali explained his complaint against Saadi. He accused Saadi of violating airport regulations by soliciting customers inside the terminal and stealing a client who had booked with Bakkali. Bakkali claims to have evidence that the customer repeatedly asked Saadi if he was Aziz, but Saadi feigned ignorance of English and kept answering affirmatively. The customer only realized the mistake after several minutes into the ride.

Bakkali claimed the driver wasn't following the queue rules. He alleged the driver skipped taking his rightful fare and instead gave the customer to a friend who was last in line. He stated that this violates the system where drivers take turns serving customers.

Saadi countered that the customer came up to him while he was waiting at the front of the queue and inquired about a taxi. The customer mentioned a long trip and asked if he could handle it. Saadi confirmed and had the customer enter the address on his phone. He claims she only asked his name after reaching exit 17, and he simply replied "Saadi." Unaware of any prior reservation, he completed the trip and gave the customer a business card. Saadi insisted he only learned it was Aziz's customer later from another driver. He denied any wrongdoing and alleged Aziz and Youness confronted him angrily upon returning from the trip.

Aziz Bakkali claimed to have witnesses who can testify about Saadi's rule violations at the airport and is ready to present them if needed. Although he has email reservation records from the customer, he failed to submit them before the hearing.

Stephen Hamlin asked why didn't he bring his witnesses to the hearing and submit the evidence.

Ali AlJarah stated that the complainant was not taking the complaint seriously by not being present in person and disregarded the hearing's importance by multitasking (phone) and not bringing relevant evidence. Due to a lack of evidence and inconsistencies, he believes the case should be dismissed.

The board will deliberate on this hearing and a decision notice will be sent by mail.

## **5. Deliberative Session**

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### **5. Deliberative Session**

The board entered a deliberative session at 7:00 PM and ended at 7:15 PM.

Youness Jamil recused himself from the deliberative session due to conflict of interest.

## **6. New Business**

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Paul Hines requested that Hayley McClenahan share the airport commission's thoughts on the proposed ordinance changes related to vehicles for hire. He wanted to know if she could briefly summarize their feedback.

Hayley McClenahan shared that there are suggestions for improving the signage on credit card payment. The signage is meant to inform passengers about the temporary cash-only period before credit card processing is available. The City Council is expected to discuss this on Monday to recommend sending the proposal to the Ordinance Committee for further review based on feedback from the airport commissioners.

The committee's schedule and current workload will determine when they can review the ordinance. City Council rules allow the Council to take over the ordinance if the committee hasn't addressed it after 3 meetings. However, it's expected that the committee will likely review it within the next few meetings after it's officially referred to them.

Hayley McClenahan informed the board they can attend the ordinance committee meeting to share further feedback on the draft. They should contact the chair of the committee.

**The next meeting will be held on 08/14/2024 @ 5:30pm.**

## **7. Adjournment**

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Motion to adjourn the meeting by Stephen Hamlin, seconded by Youness Jamil.

Approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 PM.

# DRAFT Vehicle for Hire Licensing Board: Annual Report DRAFT

Burlington, Vermont

August 14, 2024

## Mission

[for discussion] The mission of the vehicle for hire licensing board is to ensure safe, affordable and equitable access to vehicles for hire in the Burlington, Vermont region including the Patrick Leahy Burlington International Airport (“BTV Airport”).

## Report

The Vehicle for Hire Licensing Board (“VFH Board”) is composed of three members of the public, with Associate City Clerk Tenzin Chokden and Assistant City Attorney Hayley McClenahan serving as clerk and counsel, respectively, for the board’s meetings.

Before September 2023, the VFH Board did not have sufficient representation from the general public, so city councilors had served on the VFH Board. Having the required three members from the general public, on Sept. 6th, 2023 the VFH Board elected Paul Hines as Chair.

Over the last year the VFH Board has adjudicated 9 complaints from members of the public, the majority of which resulted from inconsistent use of city-approved meter rates by drivers from BTV Airport.

In order to address the core issues underlying most of these complains, the VFH Board has taken several actions:

- The VFH Board performed some research and found that the city-approved rates, which had not been updated in years, were significantly lower than others in the regions. The VFH Board subsequently updated the rates. The new rates went into effect on April 15, 2024.
- In addition, the VFH Board found that many of the complaints involved the inconsistent use of taxi meters and less-than-universal acceptance of credit cards, which left many taxi customers confused or frustrated with the payment process. To address these issues the VFH Board, with help from Assistant City Attorney McClenahan, has proposed updates to the City Ordinance sections 30-4, 30-22 and Appendix E to require that drivers accept credit card payments and use the city-approved rates for all rides less than 50 miles originating from BTV Airport. These ordinance updates are currently awaiting approval by City Council.

- Furthermore, the VFH Board has been operating with only three of five positions filled, which has sometimes made it difficult to conduct business if one of the board members is not available. To address this issue, first, the board requests that City Council appoint two additional board members to fill the open positions. Second, the board, has proposed an update to City Ordinance to ensure that a member of the Transportation, Energy and Utilities Committee can serve as a substitute VFH Board member if needed.

Finally, the VFH Board has been working with the city's Chief Innovation Officer to identify technology options that could further improve the quality, equity and availability of taxi service in the city. The VFH Board will continue to investigate these options in the coming year.

## VFH Board Members

- Paul Hines, Chair
- Youness Jamil, Member
- Stephen Hamlin, Member