



**BURLINGTON VEHICLE FOR HIRE LICENSING BOARD
BUSHOR CONFERENCE ROOM, 1ST FLOOR, CITY HALL, 149 CHURCH ST.
BURLINGTON, VT 05401 OR REMOTELY VIA ZOOM.**

MINUTES OF MEETING

September 6, 2023

Member Present:

Paul Hines
Youness Jamil
Stephen Hamlin

Other Present:

Attorney Kyle Clauss
Tenzin Chokden

Paul Hines called the meeting to order at 5:40PM.

1. Agenda

1.1. Motion to amend/adopt agenda

Motion to accept the agenda by Stephen Hamlin.
Seconded by Youness Jamil.
Agenda approved unanimously.

2. Chair Appointment

2.1. Chair Appointment Election

Paul Hines opened nominations to appoint Chair for the board. Stephen Hamlin and Youness Jamil nominated Paul Hines. The board unanimously elected Paul Hines as Chair and he accepted.

3. Previous Minutes

3.1. Previous Minutes Approval

Motion to accept to previous the minutes was made by Stephen Hamlin. Seconded by Youness Jamil
Approved unanimously.

4. Public Forum

4.1. PUBLIC FORUM - Verbal Comments

No members of the public were present for the public forum.

5. Hearings

5.1. Airport Winooski Cab

Nicholas Junjulas, the complainant, and Abdi Dhere, the owner of Airport Winooski Cab were both sworn in by attorney Kyle Clauss.

Nicholas Junjulas shared his testimony by stating he took Airport Winooski Cab on May 16, 2023 from the airport to his destination. He noticed the driver didn't have a meter as they got closer to his destination. He asked the driver about the meter and how much he was going to charge him. The driver replied he is going to charge him \$33 and he doesn't need a meter. Nicholas didn't agree with the price because he has had taken this cab ride many times and it generally costs about \$14-\$1. He lives about 3 miles away from the Airport. He swiped his credit card and later saw in the statement that he was charged \$33 for the ride.

Abdi Dhere shared his testimony by stating he has been driving cab for 18 years, provides great customer service. He is familiar with places in Vermont and knows how much to charge customers and he does not need a meter or use meter to charge customers for fare. He mentioned a \$200 charge that a customer owes him.

Paul Hines asked Abdi Dhere if he knew this complaint is about a \$33 charge not a \$200 charge.

Abdi Dhere answered that he is nice to everyone and he treats everyone equally. He has a court hearing on December 18th, 2023, but the case is not about him treating someone badly.

Youness Jamil added that Abdi Dhere is on probation. He asked Abdi if he remembers this customer, who is complaining about a \$33 charge for a 3 mile ride. He asked if the price was negotiated before the ride started.

Abdi Dhere replied that he is not going to speak to him and he will only answer to the board.

Youness Jamil told him he is a member of the board and Paul Hines confirmed.

Abdi Dhere answered that he told the customer about the fare before the ride and this is his practice with all customers.

Nicholas Junjulas argued that the driver did not mention the fare charge beforehand. He said that if he knew the charge was going to be \$33 for a 3 miles ride, he would've never taken the ride from the cab and would have gone to the next the cab in line. He has never seen anyone without a meter in taxi cab before this.

Paul Hines asked about the condition of the car at the time.

Nicholas Junjulas said the car was not clean, and the driver did not have a good sense of direction, nor did he have any navigation system in his cab.

The board was not able to reach Abdi Dhere afterward as he was muted and didn't respond to any further requests made by the board. The hearing ended at that.

6. Deliberative Session

6.1. Deliberative Session

Motion to enter deliberative session: Stephen Hamlin

Seconded by: Youness Jamil

Approved unanimously. The board entered deliberative session to discuss the hearing.

7. Discussion

7.1. Memo to City Council

1. Concerns about the existing Vehicle for Hire system

The board discussed their concerns around the current vehicle for hire system. These concerns included:

- Stephen Hamlin mentioned that drivers need to read and understand the ordinance to be able to operate as vehicles for hire and follow the rules.
- Youness Jamil shared that the drivers choose to use a flat rate instead of using their meters because the meter rate hasn't been updated. The drivers are not making enough money and also there is no one local who can work on meters.
- Paul Hines brought up a concern which was previously brought up by Youness Jamil on the taxi drivers who are purchasing multiple airport queue permits and not operating at all.
- Updating meter rates and adding surge charge for late night service.
- City Licensing and Airport licensing are not in agreement.
- Meter rates may not be comparable to what rates in other cities are.

2. Ideas for modernizing and improving the system

The board discussed their ideas and updates around modernizing the current vehicle for hire system. These included:

- Paul Hines had a discussion with Scot Barker, City Chief Innovative Office in regards to replacing current meters with app based meter. Scot Barker will research further.
- Educating drivers on rules of operating as a vehicle for hire. More signage at the airport such as the passenger bill of rights and rules, so the passengers know their rights.
- The ordinance change on the board's recommendation of changing the age of vehicle to 15 years will be presented at the next city council meeting.
- Enforcement at the Airport: making sure the licensees are licensed and revoke queue permit from drivers who are not licensed.
- Recommend that the airport commission to add more airport queue permits, so other drivers can start working and be available.
- Kyle Clauss will the draft the memo and share among the board.

8. New Business

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8.1. New Business

Youness Jamil heard from other drivers who are complaining about the volume of taxi business at the airport going down because of Uber and Lyft. The drivers would go without any customers for 4-5 hours while sitting in the queue and are saying they are not making money at the Airport. Nic Longo helped put out more signs inside the airport on taxi service but it has not made any difference.

Paul Hines added that because of the experience that he had with taxi services at the airport, he doesn't recommend taking taxi service to travelers, who come to visit Burlington and others are likely learning from these bad experiences as well.

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, 10/11/2023 at 5:30pm.

9. Adjournment

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9.1. Motion to adjourn

Motion to adjourn: Stephen Hamlin

Seconded: Paul Hines

The meeting ended at 7:20PM