

**Council President Joan Shannon**

December 16, 2013

**Members of the City Council**

In the annual report to the City Council a few weeks ago, the Burlington Airport Commission noted that it wished to be relieved of its apparent responsibility for administering taxi services in the City. This responsibility is very important for the safety of the travelling public in our area...

Much time was used to re-write the Vehicles for Hire Ordinance which was passed unanimously by the Council and signed by the Mayor in 2011. It was recognized at the time that subsequent amendments would be needed. That time has come.

The Ordinance has significant shortcomings. One, its clumsy organization. There is a Taxi Licensing Board as well as a Taxi Licensing Appeals panel, both being made up of members of the City Council License Committee and the Airport Commission. For many valid reasons, primarily work conflicts, only two - the same two - of the eight potential members have served both those panels in addition to their responsibilities at Commission meetings. These taxi meetings and hearings can take all morning, averaging once a month. This is patently unfair and must be changed.

Secondly, implementation of taxis must have professional administration. Currently, taxi issues are a distraction for both the Airport staff as well as the Commission. The City can't afford it. Lacking proper staffing does not give the taxiing public the protection it needs.

Thirdly, there is complete lack of enforcement, putting the public at risk. Recently, the Taxi Appeals Board suspended the license of a driver but that driver was seen the next day operating his cab. Without enforcement, passengers are easy targets for price gouging because some taxis may operate without required metering. Anyone can put a magnetic sign on a vehicle as a taxi, operate in the City and never get 'caught.' Again putting the public at risk.

The solution? Rewrite portions of the Ordinance to set up a separate 4-person Taxi Commission and operate like Code Enforcement and Parking Administration. Hire a Taxi Administrator and staff support, plus any enforcement personnel as needed. Further, this entity must be financially supported through its own fees and other related income.

It is recommended that this be implemented for the next fiscal year because the Commission feels the current method is unfair and the ordinance has major flaws, including lack of enforcement.

APPROVED BY THE AIRPORT COMMISSION

/s/ JEFF MUNGER, CHAIR

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