



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 6, 2015

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Public Hearing, Second Reading and Final Passage of an Ordinance to Amend and Reordain Title 9 (Licensing and Regulation), Chapter 12 (Taxicabs and Other Vehicles For Hire) of the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, as Amended. [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

ISSUE: Consideration of a request to:

- Restructure the taxicab driver certification process;
- Update the taximeter requirements;
- Require that taxicab companies maintain insurance records of all of their drivers; and,
- Minor editorial revisions to Title 9, Chapter 12 of The Code of the City of Alexandria.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council hold the public hearing and adopt the ordinance on Saturday, May 16, 2015.

BACKGROUND: In February 2015, the Code of Virginia was amended to allow the operation of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft. To better align the City of Alexandria taxicab industry with the recent State Code amendments as well as make other improvements, staff is proposing the attached ordinance change.

DISCUSSION: To more closely align the City code with the revised State Code, staff is proposing: 1) restructuring of the driver certification process; 2) updating the taximeter requirements; 3) requiring that taxicab companies maintain insurance certification records for their drivers; and, 4) minor editorial revisions to Title 9, Chapter 12 of The Code of the City of Alexandria. These changes were not proposed during the Biennial Taxicab Review because the State had not finalized the ordinance change allowing the operation of TNCs.

The proposed restructuring of the driver certification process will more closely parallel the requirements in the State Code for TNCs. The existing requirements for certifying driver applicants are obsolete and create a long and bureaucratic process for new drivers to navigate. A potential taxicab driver must wait months to be certified to drive in Alexandria when they can drive for a TNC in just a week or two. This process not only taxes limited city resources, but makes it difficult for taxicab companies to fill driver vacancies. This problem is expected to proliferate because companies now compete for drivers with TNCs which have a much more streamlined process for certifying drivers. The main impediment with the existing process is that all of the drivers must be tested by the City. The proposed revision will allow taxicab companies to test applicants, using a City Hack Office approved test, and provide certification that each applicant has passed the test. The City Hack Office will continue to administer a brief oral exam to ensure potential drivers are fit for service.

The proposed change in the requirements for taximeters is being undertaken to allow the City's taxicab companies to use newer technology. This change builds on City Code changes made as part of the Biennial Review in January which replaced the requirement for a two-way radio with wireless dispatch equipment. The current City Code was written decades ago and still requires a mechanical taximeter connected to the vehicles drivetrain. Changing the requirements will allow Alexandria taxicabs the use of modern computerized devices that can take advantage of GPS technology, wireless dispatch equipment and the use of Smart Phone apps for service and billing.

The existing City Code has long required drivers to provide insurance certification documentation to the City's Hack Office who then maintained this information. This placed the responsibility of ensuring that all the drivers and vehicles are insured under the Hack Office. In many ways this requirement seems unnecessary. The taxicab companies have an obligation to their customers to ensure that all of their drivers and vehicles are properly insured. Staff believes that this section of Code derives from the pre-1982 code which was a medallion type system and the City had to manage all of the drivers. Now more responsibility for drivers rests in company hands.

There are also a number of editorial changes being proposed to clean-up the existing Code, including a no longer applicable driver transfer definition that was inadvertently not deleted when the Code was last amended. The proposed editorial changes do not change any of the requirements in the existing Code.

The Traffic and Parking Board held a public hearing on April 27, 2015 to consider these proposed changes to Code and are recommending approval.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no direct fiscal impact on the City government.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Ordinance Cover

Attachment 2: Ordinance

STAFF

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