



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** JUNE 3, 2015

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

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

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Introduction and First Reading. Consideration. Passage on First Reading of an Ordinance Authorizing Amendments to Section 9-13 of the City Code - Towing and Storage of Motor Vehicles.

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of an ordinance authorizing amendments to Sec. 9-13 of the City Code section Towing and Storage of Motor Vehicles. These amendments will increase the maximum allowable towing fee and change the letter height on towing warning signs.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council consider the ordinance on first reading and set it for public hearing and final passage on Saturday, June 13, 2015.

**BACKGROUND:** The City's towing ordinance was last revised on June 5, 2013 based on recommendations provided by the then Ad Hoc Towing Services Advisory Board. Two of the items that were revised in the last change to the code were: 1) the standard tow fee was increased from \$75 to \$125 to bring the City's fees in line with the neighboring jurisdictions and the State maximum and 2) the size of the warning sign was reduced so that a standard size sign blank could be used.

**DISCUSSION:** The Towing Advisory Board met in November 2014, reviewed the City's towing ordinance and suggested increasing the rate for a standard tow from \$125 to \$135, and reducing the letter height on warning signs from 3 inches to 1.5 inches. City staff recommends adopting the board's proposal and for that purpose the following changes to the towing ordinance:

**Sec. 9-13-3 - Towing and storage fees and regulations:**

To maintain consistency with the towing rates in surrounding jurisdictions and State Code, staff recommends increasing the cost of a standard tow from \$125 to \$135. Since the City's last rate change, the Commonwealth of Virginia, Arlington and Fairfax Counties have increased their tow fee from \$125 to \$135. This proposed

change would ensure consistency across jurisdictions since the same towing companies are operating in these jurisdictions. Moreover, cars towed from Alexandria are primarily being taken to lots in Fairfax County. Customers are likely to be charged the \$135 as the lot operators are not always clear on the origin of the towed vehicle. Thus, when fees are inconsistent it can cause confusion for both operators and vehicle owners and may inadvertently compound the difficulty of the towing process. City staff can only enforce the correct fee when they are notified by vehicle owners of an incorrect charge.

Sec. 9-13-10 - Warning Signs:

To allow sufficient space for the required lettering on the warning sign face, staff proposes to reduce the letter height from currently 3 inches to the minimum allowable letter height of 1.5 inches. When the dimensions of the warning sign was reduced in 2013, the minimum lettering size was never reduced, which makes it difficult to comply with the current text of the ordinance.

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

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: Ordinance Cover

Attachment 2: Ordinance

**STAFF**

Emily A. Baker, Acting Deputy City Manager

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