



Legislation Text

File #: 20-0584, Version: 1

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 5, 2020

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

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

DOCKET TITLE:

Public Hearing and Consideration of a License Amendment to allow the Potomac Riverboat Company to provide Water Taxi Commuter Service.

ISSUE: Consideration and Approval of a License Amendment to allow the Potomac Riverboat Company to provide Water Taxi Commuter Service.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council (1) hold the public hearing for the proposed License Amendment (Attachment 1) to allow the Potomac Riverboat Company to provide Water Taxi Commuter Service, and (2) after the public hearing approve this proposed license amendment.

BACKGROUND: The City of Alexandria entered into a five-year license agreement with Spirit Cruises, LLC, owner of Potomac Riverboat Company, on April 1, 2018 to operate a water taxi service, site seeing tours and charter vessel rentals from the City of Alexandria Marina (Attachment 2). The current license agreement prohibits water taxi service from beginning before 9:30 a.m. specifically to discourage commuter service by water taxi as provided in paragraph 9(a):

Commuting Restriction: *The parties expressly agree that this condition is intended to prevent use of the Licenses Vessels for commuting purposes from the Alexandria City Marina. Water Taxi Service as provided in paragraph 7 (e) shall not commence before 9:30 a.m. on Monday through Friday of any week (with the exception of holidays). However, the Licensee may provide Water Taxi Service with Licensed Vessels prior to 9:30 a.m. for special event activities. This prohibition shall not preclude Licensee from undertaking new services utilizing the Licensed Vessels and the Berths with the prior written consent of the City Manager.*

Under the existing license agreement Spirit Cruises, LLC is allowed to provide water taxi service to ***National Harbor, Prince Georges County, Maryland; the National Mall., Washington D.C.; Diamond Teague Park***

(i.e., *Washington Nationals Ballpark*), Washington, D.C.; *The Wharf*, Washington, D.C.; *Georgetown*, Washington D.C., *Audi Soccer Stadium*, Washington, D.C., and *Mt. Vernon Estate*, Alexandria, VA; and the City Marina in the City of Alexandria. Per authorization by City Council, any additional and/or new water taxi service can be considered and approved at the discretion of the City Manager.

DISCUSSION: Between approximately Memorial Day and Labor Day 2018, The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) implemented its Platform Improvement Project which closed all four Metrorail stations in the City Alexandria (Braddock Road, King Street-Old Town, Eisenhower Avenue and Van Dorn Street). To aid City resident commuters, the City Manager used his discretion under the license agreement to temporarily waive the commuter restriction as defined in paragraph 9(a) allowing the Potomac Riverboat Company Water Taxi Service to begin operations at 6 a.m. as a pilot program to determine potential water taxi demand as well as ridership impacts to parking in Old Town.

Contrary to past concerns, staff received no reported parking complaints or crush capacity in garages as a result of allowing commuter taxi service. In addition, a survey of the City determined that 90 percent of water taxi commuters were former Metrorail riders and 85 percent of these commuters said they either walked or biked to the City Marina. Commuters noted that they did not stop riding Metrorail altogether, but many utilized the water taxi from the City Marina and boarded Metrorail at L'Enfant Plaza, which is a short shuttle bus ride away from District Wharf. Taxi commuters (including a few City employees) commuted from Washington, D.C. to work in Alexandria.

Therefore, staff is recommending the following text as an amendment to paragraph 9 (a):

***Commuting Services:** The parties expressly agree that the Licensed Vessels may be used for commuting purposes from the Alexandria City Marina. Water Taxi Service as provided in paragraph 7(e) shall not commence before 6:30 a.m. on Monday through Friday of any week (with the exception of holidays). However, the Licensee may provide Water Taxi Service with Licensed Vessels prior to 6:30 a.m. for special event activities. The Licensee may undertake new services utilizing the Licensed Vessels and the Berths with the prior written consent of the City Manager.*

The Alexandria Waterfront Commission endorsed the license amendment at its November 19, 2019 regular meeting (Attachment 3). The above listed sites remain the only sites the Spirit Cruises/Potomac Riverboat Company can serve, unless that list is authorized to be expanded by the City Manager.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. License Amendment
2. License Agreement between the City of Alexandria and Spirit Cruises, LLC
3. Waterfront Commission Endorsement

STAFF:

Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager

James Spengler, Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities

Jack Browand, Division Chief, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities

Karen Snow, Senior Assistant City Attorney