

REGULAR TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING
Thursday, February 17, 2000

Chairperson, Mary Gregory, called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Members present were Mary Gregory; Jourene Hout; Carl Berger; Guy Mercurief; and Police Chief Bob Petitt. Chief Petitt was the meetings note taker. A quorum was declared.

ROLL CALL

There are still three vacant positions on the Commission.

VACANT POSITIONS

There were no people present to be heard.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD

A motion to approve the minutes from the meeting of 11/10/99 was made by Carl Berger and seconded by Jourene Hout and unanimously carried.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES
OF 11/10/99**

The agenda was moved for approval by Carl Berger, seconded by Guy Mercurief and unanimously carried.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chief Petitt reported that the Bethel Police Department is in the process of issuing the year 2000 taxi permits. It was reported that several abuses have been uncovered through an audit of the permit process. These abuses will be dealt with at the time the new permits are to be issued. Chief Petitt reported that there have been a few permits that have already been rescinded and it is anticipated that an additional five permits will be recalled. The total number of permits currently in use is approximately eighty-four. It is anticipated that through the issuance of the year 2000 permits, that number will be reduced to seventy-five.

**TRANSPORTATION
INSPECTORS REPORT**

Discussion also centered around the abuse of the amount charged for taxi service in Bethel. It appears that a number of cab drivers are overcharging passengers. Chief Petitt reported that he will be looking into the fare structure during the review and re-write of the current ordinance.

TAXI FARES

Jourene Hout wanted to know what happened to the two applications for the commission that were supposed to be filed by two women that had visited the last meeting. She said that the City Clerk did not receive the applications. Guy Mercurief remembers that they were interested. Mary Gregory suggests that each member of the commission recruit a new member by next meeting. Jourene Hout brought up the issue of snow machines in the city. She has observed snow machines passing school buses in excess of the speed limit on the roadway. The snow machines also pass the school bus even when the flashing red lights have been activated.

MEMBER COMMENTS

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Guy Merculief stated that he believed that if a licensed driver in an automobile hits a snow machine the licensed driver is at fault. It would be a good idea to have cops on snow machines. There is a lot of gang type activity taking place on snow machines. Several youths together on a number of snow machines see a lone rider and they approach and jump on the single rider. They think that because they have so much protective gear on they can get away with any crime. We need to tailor our enforcement efforts to meet the needs of Bethel and not think of them as just recreational vehicles.

MEMBER COMMENTS
(continued)

Carl Berger expressed his concerns about minors riding on snow machines without any parental supervision. He wanted to see more proactive enforcement. He would like to see more citations written for snow machine violations. Chief Petitt pointed out that enforcement is very difficult without the proper tools to conduct such enforcement. Driving after snow machines in a car and trying to effect a traffic stop just does not work and the snow machine just keeps on going and off into the tundra or out across the river. Carl thought it would be good for the council to remind all adults and children to use good common sense when operating off road vehicles.

Mary Gregory talked about a permit cap for taxi cabs. Chief Petitt pointed out that it would be a fine line to determine what the cap should be and that there may be some constitutional issues raised when establishing a cap without good justification. Mary also expressed her concerns about snow machines and the berm near the school where they are using it as a jump. It could be a public safety problem if not controlled.

The taxi ordinance was discussed and it is in the process of being revised. Jourene Hout moved to postpone action on the ordinance to a later date. The motion was seconded by Carl Berger and passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Smoking in taxi cabs was discussed and Guy Merculeif suggested that the cab drivers have the right to refuse service to anyone. He said that he knew of one instance where the cab driver was smoking in the cab and the passengers were a pregnant woman and an infant. Chief Petitt said that the Bethel Police Department will be enforcing the smoking ordinance and that letters will be sent to all cab operators advising them the cease this activity.

NEW BUSINESS

Carl Berger made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Guy Merculeif, unanimously carried and the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

REGULAR TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING
Thursday, May 11, 2000

Chairperson Mary Gregory called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Members present were Mary Gregory, Carl Berger, Billy McCann, Joerene Hout, Guy Mercurief (arrived at 7:50 p.m.), Lieutenant Peter Crum, Andrew Steele, and Cyndee Simpson-Sugar was the meeting's note taker.

ROLL CALL

Approximately 15 – 20 taxi cab drivers attended the meeting to speak about the taxi permit fee increase. Concerns expressed included that the fee increase was too high; a little raise would be okay, but proposed was too high; cost of gasoline was going up; and cost of insurance was going up. It was also expressed that some drivers are making only minimum wage. The individuals who spoke were Mefail Kadrioski, Kusko Cab; Hugh Short, Alaska Cab; Dominic Malaj, Alaska Cab; James Libby, Alaska Cab; Skender Mustaf, Kusko Cab; Young S. Kwak, Taxi Cab.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD

A motion to approve the minutes from the meeting of March 23, 2000 was made by Carl Berger and seconded by Joerene Hout and carried unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF
MINUTES OF 3/23/00**

Lt. Crum reported that the Public Safety and Transportation Commissions have been merged. Joerene Hout reported that the member numbers will increase from 7 to 9 and Mike O'Brien will most likely be the Council representative. The Commission will meet on the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. If needed, after the commissions are merged and have met, the meeting time may be reviewed. The next meeting will be Thursday, June 8th.

Andrew Steele told the commission that Chief Pettitt suspected that there would be good representation from the Taxi community and he suggested that it might be a good idea to schedule a work session on the taxi permit increase before the next meeting.

The Agenda, with amendments to "New Business", was moved for acceptance by Joerene Hout, seconded by Carl Berger and carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

TRANSPORTATION INSPECTOR'S REPORT

Andrew Steele presented the Transportation Technician's report for 4/13/00 and 5/11/00. There are 76 taxi permits on the road. There has been a reduction of 16 permits and the number may be reduced by another 4 to 6.

The DMV, since its reopening on February 22, 2000, has brought in \$40,916.00. The City gets 50% of license renewals, 30% of title of registration, and 100% of road tests. Andrew does road tests on Wednesday morning and Thursday afternoons. Commencing June 1st, now that the rush is over and the clerk is experienced, hours will be trimmed back. We now have a voice mail system at the DMV and anyone who calls in will hear a message about the hours of operation.

May 1st was the first of the 2000 biannual Taxi Inspections. Inspections are done in May and September. Visual inspections and compliance checks are done on all Taxi's during this time. Taxi's are inspected when the companies come to pay their permit fees during the first 10 days of the month. On several cases windshields were found to be in a condition of needing replacement. They were judged to be dangerous to a point where if they got any worse they could be hazardous. The driver is given a first aid coupon and must have repairs completed within a month.

During the inspections Mr. Steele noticed that cabs carry many different kinds of child seats. About two dozen of all the cabs have car seats that are in serviceable condition. Mr. Steele showed examples of the worst child seats he found. The examples varied from ones that were freshly painted and were toxic, lack of tags to hold seat belts in place, a restaurant booster chair, no cushions only plastic, used as depository for oil cans, to ones that were in pieces and would not stay together at all. After seeing the disgusting condition of many of the child seats found in cabs, Mr. Steele suggested that the commission may want to look into making the ordinance stronger.

Based on comments from the public at the meeting, Carl Berger suggested that the amount of the taxi permit increase be reconsidered. Mr. Berger makes the recommendation that a fee of \$125.00 a month be considered. Mr. McCann shared experiences driving cab and returning empty. Mr. Mercurief agreed with the \$25.00 increase. Ms. Hout expressed that the cab drivers are being hit in triple with increases in gasoline,

COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENTS

insurance and permit fees. We haven't looked at dispatch records yet to see what the average driver makes, but she felt that a modest increase was warranted. Even though it cannot be earmarked for roads, she'd like to see an amount equal to the increase go into road maintenance. Hopefully that would decrease some of the repair expenses on vehicles.

Chairwoman Gregory thanked the cab drivers for coming to the meeting. She announced that there are two seats on the commission for members from the cab community. Those seats are currently empty and she encouraged them to apply.

Mary Gregory thanked the Chief and the Department for doing their job. Members thanked Andrew for bringing in the car seat examples. Discussion followed on the Police Memorial Awards Banquet and Torch Run.

Lt. Crum said that we may wish to coordinate snow machine safety education with injury prevention. The school resource officer will probably be involved and it would most likely begin in the fall. Mary Gregory expressed that we need to begin planning. Guy Mercurief commented on video's he's seen on three wheeler safety.

OLD BUSINESS

Carl Berger moved that the taxi permit fee be increased from \$100.00 to \$125.00. Guy Mercurief seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

It was decided that a work session with Taxi Cabs was not needed since a new recommendation to the Council has been made.

NEW BUSINESS

A motion was made by Carl Berger to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. The next meeting will be at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, June 8th, at the New City Offices.

ADJOURNMENT