

Metropolitan Taxicab Commission Emergency Meeting

June 23, 2007 @ 10:00 am
100 North Tucker Boulevard, Auditorium

Members present: Chairman Hamilton, Commissioners Banahan, Bennett, McNutt, Reeves, and Rudawsky

Members absent: Commissioner Haile and Satz (*One seat on the Commission remains vacant.*)

MTC staff: Barker, Deering, Hammond, Hinton, Scherer and Tully.

Legal Department: Counselor McCarthy

EMERGENCY SESSION

Chairman Hamilton called the Emergency Session to order at 10:23 AM. Chairman Hamilton announced that Supervisory Agent Douglas Scherer was serving in the capacity of Acting Director while Director Tully was out of the country on vacation. The Chairman informed the public that the reason for the meeting was to discuss the situation relating to the Wilson Taxicab Company.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Immediately after his opening statements, the Chairman entertained a motion to suspend the public session and recess to an Executive Session. Mr. Banahan motioned, and it was seconded by Mr. Bennett. The motion passed unanimously and the Commission recessed to an Executive Session at 10:25 AM.

PUBLIC SESSION

The Commission returned from Executive Session and re-opened the public session at 11:28 AM. Mr. McCarthy explained the situation related to the investigation and suspension of the Wilson Taxicab Company C.C.N.s. The Chairman added that Director Tully used the precedent set during the collapse of Allen Cab and St. Louis Auto Livery waiving the requirements for the transfer of vehicles to other companies. The issue that arose was with regard to the approval of six vehicles to A Best Taxi and two to Metropolitan Cab Corporation. As of 9 AM on Thursday, June 21st, the Chairman issued an order suspending the transfer. In addition, any vehicles in the process of being modified were ordered to cease and no further modifications were to continue, or be initiated, until the Commission had an opportunity to meet and discuss the issue in regular session.

Chairman Hamilton motioned for the Commission to authorize the actions taken by the staff with respect to the transfer of the six C.C.N.s from Wilson to A Best and the transfer of the two C.C.N.s from Wilson to Metropolitan Cab Corporation. In addition, as the precedent previously established, the remaining Wilson cabs may transfer to any cab company that has the capacity to absorb them, but no more to companies who are at or have exceeded their cap. The Commission will continue with the procedures in place with regard to planned growth or additions to the fleet being withheld until the completion of the transportation study. The motion was seconded by Mr. Banahan. During discussion, the Chairman noted the remaining driver owned vehicles were still eligible to move to a fleet -- with open spots -- within a thirty day window and the age requirements/fees would be waived.

With no further discussion, the Chairman called for a roll-call vote. Prior to the vote, the Chairman reminded the two members present on the Commission who are also representatives of the industry, to abstain from the vote to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The secretary then called the roll-call vote: Banahan, yea; Bennett, yea; Hamilton, yea; McNutt, abstain; Rudawsky, abstain; Reeves, yea. With four yeas, zero nays, and two abstentions, the motion passed ratifying the June 18, 2007 Order of the Director with the conditions indicated. The suspension of the June 18th Order, issued by Acting Director Scherer, was automatically rescinded at the passing of the motion.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Attorney Mark Goodman, representing A Best Taxi, requested a clarification on the order that was amended. Mr. McCarthy clarified it was the June 18th order, and the subsequent suspension issued by the Acting Director was rescinded.

Zerebrook Gebru, representing the Metropolitan Taxicab Corporation, addressed the Commission. He inquired about four vehicles. He claimed he was to get four vehicles. Mr. McCarthy responded that the commission had only issued approval paperwork for two vehicles. At the time of the Chairman's order at 9am on Thursday, the Commission only had two on file.

Charles Kirkwood of Midwestern Construction Company addressed the Commission. He spoke on behalf of Ebony Cab Company. He summarized a letter he handed to the Commission. He feels there is a void in North St. Louis and there aren't any cab companies owned by black Americans. The Chairman responded to his statements and referred him to Dr. Mundy to participate in the transportation study. He further added that the actions taken today resulted in no new growth in the industry. In addition, he noted since the Commission took over, the overall number of C.C.N.s has decreased by 16%.

Eyasu Asfaw, owner of A Best Taxi, addressed the Commission. He thanked the Commission for their decision and for helping the drivers.

Ahmed Dirir, associate of Mr. Kirkwood, inquired about presenting his findings to Dr. Mundy. Mr. Hamilton addressed the public and invited assistance. He informed them methods of contact would be posted on our website when the Dr. Mundy is ready to receive input.

Adisalam Elmi, a Wilson Cab Company driver, addressed the Commission. He did not understand what is going on and asked for help. He was in the process of moving to Metropolitan Cab, but did not have written approval. Chairman Hamilton referred his inquiry to the Acting Director.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Hamilton motioned a motion to adjourn. Mr. McNutt motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Rudawsky. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 AM.

*The meeting recording was transcribed by A. Hammond.
Minutes were interpreted from the transcript by D. Barker.*