

Minutes of the Fairfax County Consumer Protection Commission

August 21, 2012

7:30PM Conference 4/5
Government Center
12000 Government Center Pkwy.
Fairfax, Virginia 22035
Chairman Fee, presiding

Attendance:

Commissioners: Belkowitz, Fee,
Hargraves, Kirk, Leppin, Martz,
Nguyen, Roark, Rosier

Absent:

Commissioners: Bahhur, Hine

Staff:

Michael S. Liberman, Director
Cable and Consumer Services
Steve D. Sinclair, Chief
Public Utilities Branch
Susan C. Jones, Branch Chief,
Consumer Affairs
Susan M. Hafeli, Utility Analyst
Public Utilities Branch
Henri Stein McCartney,
Consumer Specialist II
Regulation and Licensing Branch

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 PM by Chairman Fee.

Minutes

The minutes of the June 19, 2012, and July 17, 2012, meetings were approved.

Report of the Chairman

Chairman Fee introduced the newest Commission member Leiann Leppin.

Report of the Director

Director Liberman announced the FY 2014 budget process has begun. The County Executive has requested that agencies create a 5 percent reduction plan.

Director Liberman informed the Commission on the retirements of Dave Reidenbach, Chief, Regulation and Licensing Branch and Christine Norris, Administrative Assistant III, Regulation and Licensing Branch.

Commission Matters

Commissioner Hargraves had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Roark had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Leppin had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Rosier mentioned a great service provided by Fairfax Water Authority to test your water for bacteria.

Commissioner Martz had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Belkowitz had Verizon FIOS installed. He received several brochures with promotional rates and attempted to use the promotional code online, but the code failed to work. He contacted a Verizon representative and spent considerable time to use the code, but his rate increased before the issue was corrected. Afterwards, he received a generic letter from Verizon explaining technical difficulties and to contact Verizon for an upgrade. He felt the letter was misleading.

Commissioner Nguyen had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Kirk mentioned his neighbor plays the lottery and received an offer for a \$50,000 bonus card after 10 lottery tickets had been purchased. Lottery players had to sign up online for the bonus card. He expressed concern that a privacy act had been violated because of the personal information the site requested.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

1. Taxicab Rate Increase Public Hearing

Staffs report to the Commission was prepared pursuant to its annual review of rates for taxicab services and a petition filed June 13, 2012, by the Taxicab Drivers Association of Fairfax County, for a 20% increase in rates.

Staffs report on a proposed taxicab fare rate increase contained an overview of:

- (1) rates for taxicab services in Fairfax County and the metropolitan Washington region;
- (2) the petition submitted by the Fairfax County Taxicab Drivers Association, which requests an increase in the mileage rate from \$2.00 to \$2.50 (an increase of approximately 20.2% for an average 7 mile trip); and
- (3) staffs recommended range for a justifiable rate increase (1.4% to 5.4%), based on the Fairfax County Taxicab Industry Price Index (FCTIPI).

Staff presented evidence of the strong demand for new and renewal taxicab driver licenses in Fairfax County, suggesting the adequacy of existing taxicab rates. Staff also presented additional economic and industry-related factors supporting an increase in taxicab rates within the FCTIPI range of 1.4% to 5.4%, including maintenance of

comparable rates within the region and a trend toward upward rate adjustments among regional local governments.

Given a continued rise in the Consumer Price Index economic indicators as reflected in the FCTIPI, as well as other factors outlined above, staff recommended that the Commission support a relatively modest taxicab rate increase from \$2.00 per mile to \$2.10 per mile.

Bill Stokes, President of the Taxi Association of Fairfax County, spoke to the Commission and provided documentation to support their proposal to increase the rate to \$2.50 per mile.

Public Hearing was closed at 8:40 PM.

Commissioner Kirk made the motion to raise the rate to \$2.25 per mile. Commissioner Nguyen seconded the motion.

Commissioner Hargraves called the motion. In favor of the motion: Commissioners Kirk and Nguyen. Against the motion: Commissioners Roark, Leppin, Rosier, Martz, Fee, Belkowitz. Abstained: Commissioner Hargraves. Motion denied.

Chairman Fee made the motion to accept staffs recommendation to increase the taxicab mileage rate from its current \$2.00 per mile to \$2.10 a mile. Commissioner Belkowitz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 PM.