

MODERATOR'S COMMITTEE ON TAXI MEDALLIONS
Monday, October 20, 2014 @ 7:00 PM
Room 308, Brookline Town Hall
333 Washington Street

Present were:

Joshua Safer, Chairman
Chad Ellis
Jeff Kushner
Michael Sandman

Also present were John Harris, petitioner for Article 15 which seeks to rescind the Town's right to issue medallions; David Lescohier, petitioner for Article 16, which seeks to develop an alternative to the La Capra plan, representatives of Hello Taxi and Red Cab, and Craig Bolon.

Chairman Safer opened the meeting at 7:10.

The meeting opened with a discussion of the notes on what the members agreed on, what they disagreed on, and what the next steps were. Jeff Kushner provided an extended and edited set of notes.

Jeff observed that we all agreed that there was no single approach to taxi licensing or medallions (including the La Capra plan), that "ticked all the boxes" and that we needed to weight the various criteria in order to make a rational recommendation to Town Meeting. He also said that we needed to know what the Town's obligations to the incumbent operating companies were, in both law and equity and he asked whether we could get input from Town Counsel's office. Committee members agreed with both points.

Amid El Khoury commented that it took a long time for the incumbents to agree amongst themselves and with the town on a plan for medallions. He pointed out that any new plan developed by the Moderators Committee or the Transportation Board has to be re-sold to the companies and that a delay in developing a plan puts two of the four operating companies at risk and that meanwhile taxi service in Brookline is deteriorating.

Members of the committee accepted his point that there was an element of urgency due to the multiple delays in implementing a replacement for the current licensing system. They agreed that Point 8 on Jeff's list of items on which there was no agreement should be moved to list of items on which we do agree.

There was a short discussion of whether a near-medallion can be created an agreement that we either should be issuing medallions, which are clearly understood by both the industry and the financial community, or continuing with a non-medallion system. Adults point that the positives that medallions provide are in effect the things that make medallions objectionable but there was

agreement that without medallions it's impossible to create as much revenue for the town or to create balance sheet assets for the companies. So the options come back to either medallions versus an alternate, and the question is whether there's a satisfactory alternative.

Jeff Kushner said that he and Chad had developed the outlines of a possible alternative but he urge that we hold the selectmen on their priorities, because that will lead us to craft a solution that is responsive to their priorities. The committee agreed that we should hold both the Transportation Board and the selectmen and ask them to (six?) priorities Jeff identified in his edit of Mike's notes.

The committee discussed Mike's suggestion that we asked the moderator to expand membership and we agreed that would require a delay while the members came up to speed. However, we agreed that it was important to hear from a representative of seniors, since they are important stakeholders and having an effective taxi service in Brookline. Therefore we agreed to ask Ruthann Dobush to brief us on the issues she saw on behalf of senior community.

Committee discussed timing and propose that the process would lead the selectmen to come back to Town Meeting in May 2015. The two industry representatives who were present urge that we provide some form of closure by the end of the upcoming November Town Meeting. They pointed out that it was impossible for them to make investment decisions or even to decide whether or not stay in business is independent companies unless they knew whether or not the Town was going to issue medallions.

The committee agreed that we could report the pros and cons of medallions to November Town meeting, explain that the industry needs at least a directional answer to its question, as tell Town Meeting that a vote in favor of Article 15 would be a vote against medallions, while a vote in favor of Article 16 would be an endorsement of some form of medallions – but not an endorsement of the La Capra plan. If Article 15 passed, the committee would disband and, subject to the Moderator's wishes, if Article 15 was defeated and 16 either passed or was referred, the committee would provide its input on the design of a medallion system to the Transportation Board.

Jeff Kushner agreed to revise list of items on which the committee members agreed and disagreed in accordance with the conclusions the committee reached. Josh Safer will poll the Transportation Board and contact Ken Goldstein to poll the selectmen, and he will ask Patti Correa from Town Counsel's office to brief us on the Town's obligations to the incumbents. Mike Sandman will contact Ruthann Dobush and ask her to brief us on issues she sees on behalf of seniors.