



Ad Hoc Motorcoach Task Force

Meeting Minutes
12 January 2009
City Hall, Room 1101

Attendees

Task Force Members: Mayor William D. Euille, Councilman Paul Smedberg, Rich Baier (Chair), Stephanie Brown, Bert Ely, Nick Gregory, Charlotte Hall, Poul Hertel, Hubert Herre, Valerie Ianeri, Greg Ogden, Cleveland Spruill (for Chief David Baker), Ellen Stanton, Tara Zimmnick-Calico, Lorraine Lloyd (staff) and Yon Lambert (staff).

Guests: Van Van Fleet, Wellington Watts, Betty Ward, Carolyn Cooper

Below is a summary of the City of Alexandria's Ad Hoc Motorcoach Task Force meeting conducted on January 12, 2009.

1. Welcome & Introductions

Mr. Baier welcomed everyone to the Motorcoach Task Force meeting and reviewed the topics of the evening.

2. Review Minutes & Report Back from Constituent Groups

Mayor Euille wished everyone a Happy New Year and reiterated the timetable discussed at the December 8th meeting regarding the need to bring closure to the work of the Task Force and to make a formal recommendation to the City Council and move on. He thanked everyone for their hard work and input and reminded the group there will never be a 100% general consensus and that the spring tourism season is near. The Mayor said that in July 2008 the agenda was to look at the staff report as being short-term and long-term issues. He stated in the short term, the Task Force has to come to some consensus in order to bring forward long-term recommendations. Councilman Smedberg agreed with the Mayor and said that in the eyes of many, the problem is going to get worse unless some short-term recommendations are made to begin allowing the City to manage motorcoaches.

Chair Rich Baier asked if there were any comments regarding the December 8th minutes. He then asked for a motion to approve, amend, strike any part of the minutes or staff report. Mr. Baier stated if anyone had anything they wanted to make changes on it would be discussed at the end of the meeting.



3. Review DRAFT Staff Report

Mr. Baier reiterated the need to finalize recommendations. He explained that the Task Force Charter says there must be balance among all the components of this proposed system because tourism is vital to the City and must be carefully considered how it works with the fabric of Old Town and the City. Mr. Baier said that the framework revolves around a fee-based registration that will be voluntary initially, but in full effect within 3 years. During that voluntary period, the system can be perfected. Mr. Baier said that both the industry and citizens have said that regulations are warranted. However, businesses, residents and the police need to know the rules of the regulations to ensure enforcement.

Mr. Baier said that the short-term focus will be on items not requiring regulatory authority from Richmond in the areas of enforcement, communication and education. A registration and voluntary permit system can be designed for on-line access. Coordination and regulation is needed by an advisory group comprised of residents, industry, businesses and City staff as counsel. Data collection by staff is also a necessity to know the numbers of motorcoach visits, their point of entry and exit, trip types, and size. Designated routes and additional parking locations were discussed. Mr. Baier also said that the criteria used to select which streets could be designated were outlined in the report. However, the motorcoach designated route summary recommendations on pages 33-34 are listed for informational purposes and it must be clarified in the report that these are not the final recommendations of the Task Force.

Summary of Primary Issues & Questions Raised by Task Force in Review

A) Acquisition of Regulatory Authority and Process: There was some discussion about how soon the City could acquire regulatory authority to regulate motorcoaches. Several Task Force members said that the group should recommend an earlier target, possibly the 2010 General Assembly. A target was not agreed to. However, it was agreed that the Task Force needed to make a recommendation about this issue and the general framework for the long-term process. Several Task Force members, including Old Town Civic representatives, said that the Staff Report must contain a strong commitment to this process.

B) Fees: There were questions about the legality of fees which are still unanswered but will be addressed at a future meeting.



C) *Vehicle size*: There are still questions about the City's ability - or lack thereof - to regulate the type and size of vehicles on roadways. Staff explained that the City can regulate vehicles that are oversized, over tonnage or if the structural composition of the roadway cannot support a certain vehicle type. State Code 46.2-901 regulates vehicle heights, widths, lengths, etc. Section 1104 address issues that localities may be able to address. Some members of the Task Force believe that the City should say that in the long-term, no standard buses will be allowed east of Washington Street. However, there was little consensus on this point. It was agreed that the issue of size would be discussed and reviewed in the context of a long-term recommendation at the February 2 meeting.

*[**Staff has requested that a representative from the City Attorney's office meet with the Task Force on February 2 to discuss items A, B and C above.]*

D) *Designated routes*: Members of the Task Force questioned the criteria used to recommend routes and expressed concern that many of the streets in Old Town east of Washington Street were similar and it was not easily understood how some streets were considered. The Task Force agreed that ultimately the system must disperse buses onto one of multiple designated routes. More discussion is needed regarding the final recommendations.

E) *Advisory/oversight group*: There was uncertainty as to the composition and role of this body as outlined in the Task Force recommendations. Several Task Force members said they believed that the Task Force should become the advisory body. Others said that the advisory group should be staff only. The Task Force discussed - but did not agree - that there may need to be two groups: #1- An initial, smaller workgroup to create a detailed management plan that would make its final recommendations to this body. #2- A standing advisory group or tourism board modeled on some other cities that could provide long-term monitoring. It was agreed that the makeup of the advisory body would be discussed at the February 2 meeting.

F) *Types of vehicles and size*: Members of the Task Force said that the report needed more clarity on its definition of a motorcoach. For instance, school buses that are not serving Alexandria schools should be included. Additionally, the Task Force agreed that some effort to "right-size" vehicles for their trip type must be made. The Task Force agreed that it was appropriate to begin this effort.



The Task Force revised draft recommendations and ultimately agreed to the following language for its short-term recommendations:

1. Appoint a workgroup/advisory committee to oversee the future management of motorcoach operations in the City.
2. Instruct staff to conduct counts of motorcoach operations in Alexandria from March through June.
 - A longer-term goal will be to implement an on-line motorcoach registration system by March 2010 to include fees and daily limitations on certain types of motorcoach trips.
3. Permanently designate the unit block of King Street one-way westbound and The Strand (between Wales Alley and King Street) one-way northbound to allow for safer traffic flow and provide better motorcoach management.
4. Designate the south side of Jamieson Avenue between Holland Lane and South West Street as short-term (2 hour) motorcoach parking with limited hours and seasonality. Spaces on Jamieson Avenue will provide new short-term motorcoach parking in addition to existing short-term parking on the 500 block of North Union Street (4-5 spaces) and on the 900 block of North St. Asaph Street (3 spaces).
5. Designate new 30-minute parking spaces in the following locations:
 - Two spaces at 112-118 North Washington Street
 - Two spaces at 110-112 South Washington Street
6. Instruct the Alexandria Police Department to more aggressively enforce existing city ordinances with respect to motorcoach traffic and collect/report data related to motorcoach violations.
7. Continue funding the Alexandria Police Department in its motorcoach management efforts on the unit block of King Street.

Staff agreed to the following action items:

- Revised language of recommendations would be provided to TF members and at future public meetings
- Changes as discussed at the meeting will be made to the staff report, and the next version will include a cover letter and 1-2 page executive summary
- Changes would be made to the report to better reflect residential issues
- All comments submitted by residents and TF members would be circulated and posted on-line and included as addendums to the report
- A future meeting would include more discussion about the legality of regulation and the long-term process for acquiring authority
- Staff would discuss independently with TF members to determine who might be able to serve on a working group and/or advisory body



4. Upcoming Meeting Topic Schedule & Legislative Issues

The Task Force established the following schedule:

January 26	Community meeting (Lyles-Crouch, 7 pm)
February 2	Task Force meeting— Long-Term Recommendations
February 9	Task Force meeting— Long-Term Recommendations & Final Report review prior to City Council meeting
February 24	City Council

5. Public & Task Force Q&A

There being no comments, the Task Force adjourned at 9:30 pm.

DRAFT