

REMARKS OF RED CHRISTENSEN

DIRCTOR, WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF TAXICAB OWNERS

Submitted to City of Milwaukee Public Safety Committee

November 19, 2013

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE,

ON BEHALF OF THE MILWAUKEE CHAPTER OF THE WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF TAXICAB OWNERS, I AM HERE TODAY TO REITERATE OUR COMMITMENT TO WORK WITH THE CITY TO IMPROVE THE DELIVERY OF TAXICAB TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN MILWAUKEE. As the City Attorney, the LRB and the panel will attest, WE HAVE OFFERED YOU THE MOST CURRENT INFORMATION ON BEST PRACTICES AND THE DEVELOPMENTS IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS THAT WE MIGHT WISH TO EMULATE. That is why we are in support of 99% of what is contained in this ordinance. That said, we are strongly opposed to the issuance of 100 new taxicab permits without any supporting data and without any public outcry to do so. Adding 100 new permits, a nearly 30% increase, without measuring user demand is simply replacing one arbitrary number with another.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE DISCUSSION REGARDING THE SUPPLY OF CABS IN THE CITY HAS NOT BEEN THE RESULT OF A PUBLIC OUTCRY FOR MORE CABS. In fact, despite extraordinary efforts by the Committee chair and the original sponsor and many hours of hearings, fewer than 5 members of the public have appeared to provide testimony. Of those, most complimented the service offered by the present cab industry and were non-responsive on questions about whether the city should issue more permits. To the best of my knowledge, the flawed method of arriving at the 100 number is simply the result of looking at historic numbers. There is no consideration of demand in the market. There is no consideration of the data that this ordinance will soon collect and require. There is no consideration of the fact that the city now permits 55 shuttle vehicles that compete with taxicabs for business. The 30% increase does not consider for the proliferation of private hotels shuttles that have skimmed off lucrative airport rides from cabbies. These 55 shuttle vans and some 25 private hotel shuttles

didn't exist in 1991. At least these numbers should be subtracted from any historically based formula.

Perhaps more importantly, the committee needs to understand that VIRTUALLY OVERNIGHT SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF OUR MEMBERS' CALLS FOR SERVICE DRIED UP. The chart that I have passed out shows that a change in state law regarding the way medical rides are conveyed has resulted in a more than 50 % decline in the number of rides given. THAT HAS HAD A DETRIMENTAL IMPACT NOT ONLY ON OWNERS, BUT ON DRIVERS WHO RELY ON CALL VOLUME FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD.

AS YOU WILL HEAR FROM OTHERS WHO TESTIFY TODAY owners and drivers are working harder and longer for fewer rides and less pay. To increase the number of permits by 30% at a time when business has declined by 50% will destroy the incomes of every single owner and driver in Milwaukee

It is again worth mentioning that the present legal action the city is engaged in does NOT require that the city add even a single cab. I repeat, the courts have not required that the city issue even one single new permit. City attorney Stephens will verify that. It has been THE ACTION OF AN OUT OF TOWN LAW FIRM that fundamentally questions the city's right to regulate any industry , be it taverns or restaurants or street vendors, THAT RESULTED IN THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT DECISION AFFECTING THE VALIDITY OF THE CURRENT ORDINANCE. AS YOUR CITY ATTORNEY CAN ATTEST, THAT DECISION DOES NOT MANDATE YOU TO ISSUE NEW PERMITS. TO THE CONTRARY, THE DECISION TOOK ISSUE WITH THE MANNER IN WHICH THE ORDINANCE WAS ADOPTED AND NOT WITH THE CALCULATION OF THE PROPER NUMBER OF CABS. By passing this ordinance without the language adding 100 new permits you will just as easily meet the mandate of the court.

. I CANNOT EMPHASIZE STRONGLY ENOUGH THAT A LACK OF SUPPLY OF CABS IS NOT a problem in this city and there is nothing in the record that indicates that it is. I SINCERELY HOPE THAT YOU WILL NOT ACT TO ADOPT AN ORDINANCE THAT WILL MAKE THE CURRENT CONDITIONS FOR DRIVERS AND OWNERS EVEN WORSE OUT OF A SENSE THAT YOU ARE REQUIRED TO DO SO BY THE CIRCUIT COURT'S DECISION. I urge you to pass this ordinance with language that eliminates the

immediate issuance of 100 permits and instead allows for the collection of the necessary data for one year so that the Council can make a decision based on fact, figures and honest data rather than simply replacing one arbitrary number with another.

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