

## CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Horse Drawn Carriage Workshop  
May 24, 2010

The City Commission met in a formal session Monday, May 24, 2010 at 3:30 P.M. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Joe Boles, and the following were present:

### **1. Roll Call:**

Joe Boles, Mayor/City Commissioner  
Errol Jones, Vice Mayor/City Commissioner  
Donald Crichlow, City Commissioner  
Leanna S. A. Freeman, City Commissioner  
Nancy Sikes-Kline, City Commissioner

Ron Brown, City Attorney  
Karen Rogers, City Clerk  
Timothy A. Burchfield, Chief Administrative Officer  
John Regan, Chief Operations Officer  
Mark Knight, Director, Planning and Building  
Jim Piggott, General Services Director  
Mark Litzinger, Comptroller  
Paul K. Williamson, Director, Public Affairs  
Dana Ste. Claire, Executive Director of the 450<sup>th</sup> Commemoration  
Celebration/Director, Heritage Tourism  
Carlos E. Mendoza, Assistant City Attorney  
Loran Lueders, Police Chief  
Mike Arnold, Fire Chief  
Martha Graham, Director, Public Works  
Darlene Kirkland, Recording Secretary

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### **2. Discussion regarding the Carriage Ordinance.**

Mayor Boles explained that the purpose of a workshop was to enable the Commission to receive information from City staff and discuss the issues in a public forum. He stated that during budget considerations, careful review was given to each department regarding ways to reduce expenses to the taxpayers. He pointed out that previously an agreement had been established with the sightseeing trains and trolleys. He expressed concern regarding fairness to similar industries, and felt that the horse drawn carriage industry should be afforded the opportunity to review the

proposed ordinance and express their opinion. He concluded that the carriage industry was beneficial to the City.

Commissioner Sikes-Kline felt that there was not enough overall understanding of the industry, and she agreed that the City and the people involved should meet to discuss the issues.

Commissioner Jones pointed out that there were a number of people in attendance that would like to comment on the issue; therefore, public input should be allowed. He stated that, while he felt that changes were necessary, public input was critical.

Commissioner Crichlow stated that the general procedure was to review the processes of other cities with similar programs and develop a comparable program. He felt that the proposed Ordinance could be simplified and provide fairness and profitability for the carriage companies.

Commissioner Freeman stated that the workshop was the first step toward regulating the horse drawn carriage industry; however, there would be many steps before finalization. She expressed concern that City staff negotiated the regulations before the Commission had the opportunity to discuss issues and concerns with the people involved in the industry.

Commissioner Sikes-Kline suggested hearing the staff presentation and public comment before making decisions and recommendations.

Mayor Boles pointed out that the existing Ordinance was developed a number of years ago, but he felt that it was too soon to make decisions without the input from staff and the business owners.

Commissioner Jones stated that the issue was not whether or not there was a desire to have a horse drawn carriage industry, but rather the number of carriages allowed daily, safety, location, ticket sales and reasonable operations. He added that a review of permit costs was necessary, and he suggested increasing the permit fees over a period of time.

John Regan, Chief Operations Officer, recommended developing a framework of issues for discussion.

## **MOTION**

**Commissioner Freeman MOVED to recognize the draft ordinance as a preliminary process; therefore, it was not for consideration, and to allow public comment. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Sikes-Kline and APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.**

Dana Ste. Claire, Executive Director of the 450<sup>th</sup> Commemoration Celebration and Director of Heritage Tourism, explained that one of the City's goals was to build an enhanced comprehensive Heritage Tourism program that encompassed many aspects of the visitor experience. He pointed out that the horse and carriage industry was an integral part of the visitor expectation. He noted that the franchise agreement between the City and the trains/trolleys was a business partnership that enhanced the visitor experience while providing a transit system

Carlos Mendoza, Assistant City Attorney, clarified that the intention was for the carriages to be able to operate on a daily basis. He explained that there had been previous discussions over the years regarding the development of a franchise agreement for the horse drawn carriage industry. He outlined the purpose for the proposed franchise agreement as follows:

- Costs incurred by the City for additional street sweeping and maintenance exceed the \$3,680 collected for permit fees
- Significant increase in wear and tear of the streets along tour routes

Mr. Mendoza stated that, due to budget constraints, the City could not continue to support the services required for the horse drawn carriage industry. He noted that the purpose of the draft ordinance was to begin discussions to determine a resolution to the aforementioned issues.

Public hearing was opened.

Julie Gramza Hultqurst felt that visitors should have a choice of which carriage they hired.

Allen Freed stated that the horses should be considered when discussing the issues, and that the ordinance should require the drivers to have knowledge of the health, safety and well being of the horses. He suggested limiting the daytime operations during the summer season.

Rob Cook, Attorney representing Avalon Carriages, requested an itemization of costs incurred by the City as a result of the horse drawn carriage industry.

Terry Herbert expressed concern regarding the excessive number of proposed permits.

Paul Meredith stated that he held a lien on the permits held by Avalon Carriages; therefore, he felt that if the City approved only a limited number of permits, he should be compensated.

Sean Sheppard requested that the Commission consider granting Avalon Carriages the right of refusal regarding a franchise agreement.

C.B. Hinson expressed concern regarding the issuance and limitations of permits.

Linda Papagna expressed concern for the health and safety of the horses.

Don Anthony supported regulations of the horse drawn carriage industry to ensure the safety of the horses, and the reduction of traffic, as well as pedestrian issues. He felt that increased permit fees would be reasonable.

Cecilia Mickler Laringhouse spoke in support of the horse drawn carriage industry, as it was an asset to the City.

Bob Bonner noted that many tourists visited St. Augustine to experience the horse drawn carriage tour.

Francis O'Loughlin stated that over time, there had been improvements made to the industry, and he supported further discussions.

Phil Genovar explained that during the 400<sup>th</sup> Commemoration Celebration, a horse and carriage was used to promote an event by traveling from St. Augustine to Atlanta, Georgia, which had been successful. He spoke in favor of regulations; however, he felt that there should be modifications.

Chris Fulmer questioned the licensing process for the drivers. She felt that there should not be limitations on evening hours of operation. She stated that tours regulated by the City limited the driver's ability to negotiate with customers.

Dee Buchanan expressed concern regarding the limitation of use related to the hack stands.

William Cushion suggested limiting the number of permits issued to 15, and allowing the transfer of permits to carriages owned by the same company. He pointed out that there were certain carriages used for special events only.

Jesse Sabo stated that the drivers were ambassadors of the City that provided tours, and also provided directions and recommendations to visitors. He added that there was a partnership between the carriage drivers and local business owners, which was beneficial to the City.

Alan Berry spoke in support of the horse drawn carriages.

John Danahy expressed concern regarding the enforcement of traffic regulations, as well as traffic congestion.

George Gardner stated that taxpayers paid nearly \$2 million annually hosting visitors; therefore, he felt that the tour guide industry should contribute to the expense.

Public hearing was closed.

Mayor Boles announced that there would be future public hearings to discuss the issues regarding the horse drawn carriage regulations.

### **3. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:47 P.M.<sup>1</sup>

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MAYOR

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CITY CLERK, CMC

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<sup>1</sup> Transcribed by Darlene Kirkland