

**CITY OF WOBURN
CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & LICENSE
WOBURN CITY HALL
COMMITTEE ROOM
MONDAY, JULY 1, 2024, at 6:18 p.m.**

Voting members present: Chair Robert Ferullo, Councilor William Pappalardo, Councilor Joseph Demers, Councilor Robert Toro, and Councilor Joanne Campbell

Non-voting members present: President Jeffrey Dillon, Councilor Lou DiMambro, Councilor Charles Viola, and Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen

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MOTION made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Toro to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of the meeting of May 28, 2024, all in favor, 5-0.

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Teresa’s Closet, petition for new Secondhand Dealers and Secondhand Collectors License at 164 Main Street: Representing the petitioner was Teresa Bottoni, 44 Lake St., Billerica, MA. Councilor Demers said he met with Ms. Bottoni. He said he is proposing the following conditions: 1.) Hours of operation from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m., Monday through Sunday; 2.) Fire Dept. inspection annually; 3.) There shall be no refinishing of furniture or wood working projects allowed on location. Councilor Demers said he thinks that is reasonable. Motion made by Councilor Campbell and seconded by Councilor Toro that the petition “ought to pass;” as amended; approved, 5-0.

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Communication from Woburn Cab Co. regarding Cab licenses: Representing Woburn Cab Co. was John Devine, owner, Woburn Cab Co., 100 Ashburton Avenue, Woburn, MA. Mr. Devine said he is here in the spirit of cooperation. He said Woburn Cab has to obtain special licenses approved by the City Council and it costs him \$5,250. He said he does not know how much livery licenses cost but he assumes they have to meet the same standard. He said people who drive Uber and Lyft vehicles do not have to have special plates nor do they have to undergo drug testing or obtain workmen’s compensation insurance. He said ride share drivers pay \$830-\$850 for insurance. He asked why the city of Woburn is the only community in the area which has such requirements. He said he has to obtain special plates. He said there is a double standard. He said either he should not have to pay for \$5,000 or the ride share drivers should have to pay what he pays. Chair Ferullo asked why there is a discrepancy that requires Mr. Devine to pay \$5,250. Mr. Devine replied the Uber and Lyft drivers do not have to carry the same type of liability insurance. He said he has to pay half that for his buses. Councilor Demers asked if this is an RMV or a state or a Woburn issue. Mr. Devine said Woburn has more requirements. Councilor Demers said when he drove a ride share vehicle he only had to provide insurance. Mr. Devine said ride share drivers do not have to provide insurance for the passengers. Councilor

Demers said he thinks oversight of ride share drivers is more at the state level. He said it would be virtually impossible for the city of Woburn to regulate Uber and Lyft drivers. Mr. Devine said his cab company has been in business for 82 years. He said the cab business does not generate much revenue but he has a sentimental attachment to it. Councilor Toro said he owns a construction company and he has to pay a lot of money for insurance. He said he has to compete against general contractors who can offer labor much cheaper. He said he would agree with Councilor Demers. He said he thinks this is more of an issue at the state level. Mr. Devine asked why Uber and Lyft drivers don't have to get a special license plate. He said this is not happening in Winchester and Stoneham. Councilor Toro asked why not. Mr. Devine said those towns do not have any cab companies. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said back in the day in order to get a cab license in a big city you had to obtain a medallion, and you had to pay a lot for it. She asked how that is being handled now. Mr. Devine said between Logan Express and the ride share services, a lot of business has been taken away. He said he feels obligated to maintain his cab business because that is how he started. He said a lot of cab companies have gone out of business. He said a lot of older people still use cabs but younger people don't. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said what Mr. Devine is describing is similar to the video rental industry with chains like Blockbuster. She asked if Mr. Devine could transition his cab business to something more like the ride share model. Mr. Devine said he can't. He said he can't make a living on the cab business alone. He said fax machines and email took away a lot of his business. Councilor Campbell said she is not sure if the council can have domain over ride share vehicles. Chair Ferullo said he has a study of ride shares from a few years ago that he can share with the committee. Councilor Campbell said she understands Mr. Devine wants to make it a fairer system. Mr. Devine said the ride share companies are not paying the bills he is paying. Councilor Campbell asked Mr. Devine what he is paying for that the ride shares are not. Mr. Devine said he is paying more for insurance. Councilor Campbell said it is a very interesting situation. Councilor Demers said he does not believe there is anything that allows municipalities to regulate ride share services. He said he believes the regulatory authority is the state Dept. of Public Utilities. He said he has no idea how the city would get a database of ride share drivers. He said the city cannot regulate drivers who are not based in the city. He said the city does not have the tools nor the capability to regulate ride share drivers. Mr. Devine asked why then his business is regulated. Councilor Demers said that is a valid question. Councilor Pappalardo asked to whom Mr. Devine is paying \$5,200. Mr. Devine said he is paying the insurance company for the five taxi licenses the city gave him. President Dillon thanked Mr. Devine for the services he offers at the Senior Center. He asked what happened to the cab companies in Stoneham and Winchester. Mr. Devine said they went out of business. President Dillon said in his line of work he hires a lot of subcontractors. He said if someone comes in and offers their services for less money, it's a loophole similar to the situation to which Mr. Devine finds himself.

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MOTION made by Councilor Toro and seconded by Councilor Demers to adjourn; all in favor, 5-0. Chairman Ferullo adjourned the meeting at 6:39 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST:

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees