



The Abrams Agenda



April 2016

**Palm Beach County Commissioner
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New Rules for Vehicle for Hire Ordinance Include App-Based Ride Services

It's probably no surprise to many of you that the app-based ride services, such as Uber and Lyft, have been a hot topic for the Board of County Commissioners. Technology is on the march, and the issue of regulating this growing and popular industry not only is a local issue, but is also being addressed around the world. In my district, public support was enormous. Hence, I have been committed to working with the various entities, which include the taxi, sedan and limousine companies, to come to a resolution.

Discussions started in mid-2014, and a temporary operating agreement was entered into for app-based ride services. A year later, the county deferred to the Legislature in hopes that it would enact statewide regulations, since riders routinely cross county lines, especially in South Florida. The state did not act, so the county had to address the issue. After extensive meetings with industry representatives and county staff, the Board agreed to a number of changes to the current vehicle-for-hire ordinance, which now includes the app-based ride companies.

One of the biggest points of contention was the background check on drivers. Drivers of taxis, limos, and sedans are required to undergo fingerprint checks on the FBI and FDLE databases, known as Level 2, although this has only been a requirement for about a year. Uber and Lyft, on the other hand, perform their own private background checks, which do not include the fingerprint checks with the FBI and FDLE databases. Under the revised ordinance, all vehicles will only be required to perform the private background checks.

I have made the point that Uber has picked up 20,000 riders per week in Palm Beach County without incident. While no background check can ever perfectly deter a driver from committing a criminal act, there is now a successful track record. The bottom line is that if anyone is uncomfortable, they can choose a service that provides Level 2 checks. The BCC has also created an incentive (50% fee discount) for any driver to voluntarily undergo a Level 2 background check. On balance, preserving the Uber model of 5-10 minute pick-up times is what encourages people to use the service, especially people who might otherwise drink and drive.

Some of the other changes agreed upon are:

- The ordinance applies to the entire county not just unincorporated areas but also within municipalities, unless a city opts out.
- The county's Public Safety Department will conduct audits of company records twice a year.
- All vehicles must be identified by either a decal issued by the county or by "trade dress," a distinctive display that identifies its use.
- All insurance will have to conform to the Florida law.
- Drivers must have an ID badge issued by the DCA or have acceptable digital or smartphone app.

The Public Safety Department staff will closely monitor any issues that may arise as these changes are implemented. In addition, they will also be conducting random spot checks. While these types of negotiations are never easy, I am pleased that we are able to come to a resolution.

BCC Briefs for April 19, 2016

At the April 19, 2016, Board of County Commissioners meeting, the board took the following action:

Vehicles for hire – approved a series of amendments to the county's Vehicle-for-Hire Ordinance incorporating transportation network companies, such as Uber and Lyft. The board also adopted a resolution enacting a new schedule of fees and fines for the ordinance.

Name change – approved a change of name from ABM Security Services, Inc. doing business as Elite Protection Services to Universal Protection Services, LLC. The company provides advanced life support first-response non-transport services as part of its security services to several private residential developments.

Water Utilities – adopted a resolution confirming a special assessment for a water main extension to serve two residential properties on Tangerine Blvd. in The Acreage, and approved a contract with Johnson-Davis, Inc. in the amount of \$23,515.

Trespassing – adopted an ordinance pertaining to trespassing at county-owned parks and natural areas. Persons found violating certain laws, rules and regulations, or notices contained on a posted sign may be prohibited from returning to a park or natural area for a specified period of time. An alleged violator may file a request for an appeal within 10 days of issuance of a trespass notice and paying a \$20 fee.

CareerSource – adopted a resolution approving a budget of \$13.9 million for programs and services provided by CareerSource Palm Beach County.

Adopt-A-Family – approved a contract amendment with Adopt-A-Family of the Palm Beaches to increase funding for hotel placement to homeless families by \$200,000 for a new contract amount of \$1.519 million through September 30, 2016.

Housing assistance – adopted a resolution approving the Local Housing Assistance Plan for fiscal years 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019, as required by the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program Act.

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