

The Austin Taxi Confidential

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The Official Newsletter of the Taxi Drivers Association of Austin

April 2011

TDAA “Grills” Austin City Council Candidates.

Austin Interfaith Alliance Accountability Session

By: David W. Kelley
Austin Cab 85

Austin, TX, April 10th, 2011 – For years the Austin Interfaith Alliance has held accountability sessions in order to promote its issues. At these sessions, AIA leaders ask candidates for office, and other community leaders, to support issues important to the alliance. These sessions have asked tough questions of our community leaders and provide the community with a record of their commitments.

On a beautiful Sunday evening, at St. Ignatius Catholic church, the latest session, went off like a charm. With approximately 750 in attendance, the Taxi Drivers were well represented by about 40 drivers. In addition to the good turnout of drivers, many of them wore custom T-shirts that read “TAXI DRIVERS VOTE”, (see picture below) in a most impressive display.



Photo by: Alan Pogue

The TDAA posed one question to the Austin City Council Candidates, it was, “Will you support our Legacy Permit Proposal?”, a proposal first submitted in May of 2010 that allows veteran drivers the opportunity to transfer from franchise to franchise at their own discretion. The response to this question was limited to “yes” or “no” answers and the results are listed below.

Candidate	Response
Place 1 incumbent – Chris Riley	NO
Place 1 candidate – Roger Chan	YES
Place 3 incumbent – Randi Shade	NO
Place 3 candidate – Kathie Tovo	YES
Place 3 candidate – Max Nofziger	YES
Place 5 incumbent – Laura Morrison	YES

*Continued on page 2
Continued from page 1*

TDAA Progress Thus Far, Not Bad For a Bunch of “Cabbies!”

We control our own destiny. The key is “Solidarity!”



By: David W. Kelley
Austin Cab 85

So Far, So Good...

OK, OK, I know this article closely resembles my article in the last issue. In fact some of the headlines are the same, but, there’s a reason for this. The reason is that despite the many successes of the TDAA, I still hear drivers claim that the association has not done anything for drivers. Balderdash! (I just love using this word)

First of all let me assure you that the TDAA board of directors, as well as many members, put in many hours of organizational work as well as earning a living at driving a cab. No easy task, I can tell you. So before you cast doubts on the success of the organization, I would like to point out the following.

I’m sure you are aware the city is working on a new indoor air conditioned facility for drivers at the airport. I have listened to drivers complain for years, and rightfully so, about the old facility. Do you think the city just decided to do this? No, it is the result of pressure applied by the TDAA. Last year we had the resolution 60 meetings where drivers could register their complaints to the UTC and city transportation department. Once again, this was arranged by the TDAA. It was at these meetings that the Legacy Permit was first proposed.

And don’t forget our association with both Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid and the Austin Interfaith Alliance. Before these relationships, did we have legal assistance for harassment tickets? No we didn’t. Could we present proposals to City Council? No we couldn’t.

And don’t forget the publications available on the website, which we now have, and the Bulletin Board, the list goes on. So unless you enjoy reading, the word “BALDERDASH”, admit it. The TDAA is good for you.



**I WANT YOU
TO JOIN THE TDAA**

In addition to the insight gained from the answers as listed above, it is interesting to note that TDAA president "Ann Darbonne's" briefing of the audience, about the plight of Taxi Drivers in Austin, received a standing ovation! Special thanks also goes out to drivers Joe Beers, Dan Buffington, Merga Gemedede, & Dan Lawrence, who worked on the floor committee and served as ushers at the event.

Lastly, a very special thank you goes to Austin Interfaith Alliance Lead organizer, Doug Greco, and organizer Adrian Mc Cauley who organized the event.

Update: Getting Rid of Golf Carts on Downtown Streets...

By: Daniel Lawrence
Austin Cab 84

The taxi cab round-ups outside the city hall have proven to be successful. We protested twice, outside, during city council meetings. The taxi round-ups are where taxis surround city hall. They continuously circle the building; the round-ups attracted at least thirty cabs. We also had taxi drivers holding up signs on the sidewalk that stated, "Say No to Golf Carts." Another one stated "Keep Golf Carts on the Golf Course." We got a ton of free media because of the protests. KUT 90.5 did a great news story on us. KXAN and Channel 8 news also did positive stories.

All that lead up to Urban Transportation Commission hearing where five different cab drivers expressed disapproval over the golf carts. Bertha Means spoke first expressing her opinion that golf carts would possibly act as a new cab company. Representatives for Yellow Cab were also at the hearing.

All this political action put pressure on City Council woman Randi Shade to postpone any decision on golf carts for at least three months. If we didn't take action and protest, this golf cart policy might have become legal. Chris Neilson, who owns the golf carts, has been forced to spend more of his own energy and money. It will be very hard at this point for the golf carts to become legal and act as an illegal taxi service.

We had our voices heard by the city council and flexed our political muscle. We need to continue putting political pressure on members of the city council. This was great practice for future protests and rallies.

Members of TDAA Take Political Action!

By: Daniel Lawrence
Austin Cab 84

Two members of TDAA have volunteered for a political campaign. Dan Lawrence and Joseph Beers have knocked on 378 doors for this candidate for city council. In addition, Lawrence and Beers have fundraised for this candidate. They have raised \$286 from 24 taxi drivers. In order to have our voice heard, we need to take political action.

The most direct political action is to volunteer for a political campaign. When a matter comes up before the city council regarding our needs, we will have a sympathetic ear. If you would like to contribute your time or make a political contribution, contact Dan Lawrence (Austin Cab #84) or Joe Beers (Austin Cab #12) and ask about volunteering.

Contributions Wanted:

If you would like to contribute an article, or picture, for publication in this periodical, please contact David W. Kelley; Austin Cab 85.

Leaders Wanted!

The TDAA needs leaders to serve as directors and volunteers. As the TDAA grows, and expands its political base, the number of meetings and projects grows also. The work we are doing is paying off, but, we have a lot more work to do. If you like driving a cab in Austin, and care about the future, contact any TDAA director and Directors are elected by membership and the next election will be held on June 7th.

Want to Join the TDAA?

Do you want to be a member? There are several ways you can join:

- Email info@austintaxidriver.org and ask for a membership application
- Send a letter of inquiry to: Taxi Drivers Association of Austin, PO Box 684481, Austin, Texas 78768-4481
- Ask one of the Board members of the TDAA for an application directly.

Joining is quick and easy. Membership lists are not shared with the franchises, and participation can be limited to what each individual feels comfortable with. What is important is that we all stand together and support the cause in any way we can!

TDAA works with U. T. Public Relations Department

Since school began in September, the TDAA has been the subject of a class project at the University of Texas Public Relations Department. Being a newly formed organization, with limited PR history, presented an interesting project for the students, and guess what; (as if you didn't know) they came up with a bunch of really good ideas.

We will be mounting a Public Relations campaign this year based on this valuable input. Our thanks go out to all the students for all their hard work and also to the University of Texas Public Relations Department.

New A/P Driver Facility Begins Construction

Construction on the new driver facility at the a/p is scheduled to begin on Monday, May 9th, according to TC Supervisor Royce Traywick, and is scheduled for completion in 120 days.

TDAA Officers Are:

Ann Darbonne.....President
Anna Fendlason.....Vice-President
Chris Obioma.....Treasurer
David W. Kelley.....Financial Secretary

DRIVE SAFELY!

