

# OPEN LETTER TO THE PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Dear councilors,

Last year I moved to Portsmouth from northern California because I had the impression that this was a tech-friendly, culturally progressive city. Even Google named Portsmouth the 'digital capital' of New Hampshire.

So I figured Portsmouth would be an ideal location to build a consulting startup specializing in the emerging peer-to-peer or 'sharing' economy.

Imagine my dismay at headlines all this year about clashes between Uber and the city council, with Uber saying they might need to pull out of Portsmouth entirely if the council's new transportation ordinance passed as written.

Fast forward to today. There is now a turf war on the streets of Portsmouth that is a direct result of that ordinance.

As just one example of many, the Portsmouth Herald reported that the first Uber driver pulled over and cited with a \$500 fine under your new ordinance was a grandmother and a part-time bus driver. The article said that her two female customers were asked to leave the vehicle and that they had "no other ride". This was at 12:30am on a Friday night.

Do you think this law made those girls feel more safe or less safe?

Do you think TWO COP CARS pulling over a grandmother is the best use of police resources?

The Portsmouth police officers we've heard from don't think so.

We have heard you complain about the defiance of Uber and the persistence of activists in posting flyers, but not a single word about the viciousness of some taxi drivers who

actively patrol for 'rogue' Uber drivers, gang up on them, yell at them, dangerously obstruct traffic to block in their cars, or even harass people just SUSPECTED of being associated with Uber.

This happens EVERY WEEKEND.

Please remember that Uber operated in Portsmouth safely, quietly, and without incident for a full six months before you tried to fix what was not broken.

Your stated intent in passing that ordinance was to create a "level playing field". The intent is admirable but your methods have been misguided. In my comments at a council meeting back in March, I argued that if the council wanted to create a sustainable level playing field, they should not add red tape to Uber, they should instead unshackle the taxis so that they are free to compete.

That remains the quickest and most sustainable solution. So we ask that you redefine the parameters of the transportation commission to simply observe and monitor for negative incidents. Otherwise, please trust that the residents and guests of Portsmouth can use their own judgment about which transportation service to use.

If you cannot do that tonight, please at a very minimum vote now to suspend enforcement of the ordinance while conversation continues. To do otherwise would continue the egregious waste of time and energy of Portsmouth police in chasing down Uber drivers instead of making our streets safer.

Please vote tonight - NOW - to end the turf war on the streets of Portsmouth.

Respectfully,  
Christopher David