

TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF REPORT

Finance & Administration Department



MEETING DATE:	February 11, 2025
PROJECT:	Consideration and Direction of Amendments Chapter 7 – Tour Companies of the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances
PROJECT MANAGER:	Natalie Majorkiewicz, CGFO, CGFM, Director of Finance

REQUEST:

To provide direction on Chapter 7, Tour Companies of the Bluffton Code of Ordinances.

BACKGROUND:

Chapter 7, Tour Companies was added to the Bluffton Code of Ordinances on January 11, 2011. At the time it addressed horse-drawn carriages and regulations to include:

- No more than two (2) carriage companies licensed to operate
- Bluffton history class required through the Heyward House or other approved organization
- Route restrictions
- Safety and sanitation requirements
- Veterinarian certifications and inspections
- Route approval by Chief of Police
- Wagon restrictions and requirements

On April 12, 2011, motorized and non-motorized tour companies were added to the chapter with similar requirements and restrictions:

- No more than two (2) motorized and two (2) non-motorized tour companies operating
- Bluffton history class through the Heyward House or other approved organization
- Route approval by Chief of Police

On November 8, 2016, Article V, Pedicabs was added to Chapter 7, Tour Companies. It does not have the restriction on the number of licensed companies in operation but does require a permit as well as the Bluffton history class.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Items for Town Council consideration include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Does Town Council want to continue with Chapter 7, Tour Companies as codified?

If so, it is recommended a veterinarian specializing in large animals be contracted to ensure Sec. 7-36, Treatment and condition of horses is adhered to, for compliance with the below, but not limited to:

- a. Inspection of animals for good health
- b. Proper hoof maintenance
- c. Properly fitted harness
- d. Environmental factors where horses should be restricted from being worked

2. Does Town Council want to amend Chapter 7, Tour Companies?

If so, some items for consideration are as follows:

- a. The number of tour companies permitted in each article. Currently, only two (2) animal-drawn, two (2) motorized, and two (2) non-motorized tour companies are permitted.
- b. Bluffton history class requirements. Currently, there is not a recertification or any parameters on how long the class certification is valid.
- c. Loading and offloading of passengers and tour stop locations.
- d. Hours of operation and permitted tour routes. Currently, hours of operation are restricted from 10:00 pm through 8:30 am on any day and the intent was to restrict tours to Old Town Bluffton.
- e. Does Town Council want to assign a permit and a cost?

3. Does Town Council want to remove Chapter 7, Tour Companies?

If so, does Town Council want to treat tour companies in a similar manner as permitted, business activities?

- a. Add an Article to Chapter 6, Business and Business Regulations for Tour Companies to be handled in a similar manner as short-term rental units and mobile vendors.
- b. If Tour Companies are to have regulations, does Town Council want to issue permits with a fee?

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Chapter 7 – Tour Companies