

## MIAMI BEACH

## Miami Beach IG report finds tow companies overcharged people

BY MARTIN VASSOLO  
mvassolo@miamiherald.com

An investigation of towing practices in Miami Beach found the only two companies operating in the city overcharged customers.

An audit overseen by the city's Office of the Inspector General reviewed public tows during 2017 and 2018, concluding that Beach Towing and Tremont Towing charged inflated fees for services in violation of their towing permits.

The IG report, released Thursday nearly two years after the city initiated the review, recommends that the city exert "stronger oversight" over the towing companies by updating permits requiring that tow companies photograph impounded cars to support corresponding fees and authorizing more tow com-

panies to operate in the city, making it easier to terminate or suspend one company's permit without reducing service citywide.

"The current public tow structure is not functioning as well as it should, as tow customers' rights are not being adequately enforced and it appears that there may be overcharging by the tow companies for some services," the report states.

Among the report's findings:

- The tow companies overcharged some customers by using heavy-duty tow trucks on relatively lighter vehicles when cheaper options would have sufficed.

- They charged customers a fee for entering the vehicle when no employee was observed entering the vehicle.

- The companies charged flatbed service



The impound lot for Beach Towing, one of two tow companies that operate in Miami Beach.

fees despite not using a flatbed truck to initiate the tow.

"Although the data obtained from its sample results was not extrapolated to draw conclusions on a larger scale to the population, the outcomes from the audit process stated in this report suggest that the tow companies need stron-

ger oversight," the report states.

The investigation was divided into three reports, one for each of the towing companies and a third turning the mirror on the city itself. The audit found that the Parking Department and Miami Beach Police under-billed the towing companies to the

tune of \$24,822, and were "unaware" that both towing companies lacked required insurance coverage. The companies, which tow cars at the request of the city and pay monthly fees per car towed, have since been billed for the missing tows.

Beach Towing, which is singled out in the report for its "unsatisfactory performance," was found to have charged the \$40 flatbed fee 650% more frequently than Tremont and, on average, charged customers \$268 per tow compared to \$242 for Tremont, according to the report.

Beach Towing attorney Ralph Andrade, who took issue with the report's findings, said the flatbed service fees were necessary due to the location of the company's impound lot, which is in an area with raised streets. The company notified the city in 2016 that the raising of Bay Road and Dade Boulevard would make the use of flatbeds more frequent, according to an email obtained by the Miami Herald.

Andrade said the reported irregularities were "billing errors totaling less than

\$5,000," or 0.15% of the company's total revenue during the two-year audit period.

"The IG presents no evidence whatsoever that any alleged 'overcharge' was the result of anything other than inadvertent human error, and Beach Towing does not concede the alleged fractional error," Andrade said. "The math does not lie. This is a great day for Beach Towing! The IG should next undertake an audit of the enormous cost of this misguided investigation to the Miami Beach taxpayers."

A representative for Tremont Towing did not respond to a request for comment.

The Miami Beach administration requested a towing audit in November 2018, but the City Commission voted in June 2019 to terminate the review and authorize a private firm to conduct the audit. Inspector General Joseph Centorino, who was appointed to the recently created office last November, oversaw the completion of the work.

Martin Vassolo:  
305-376-2071,  
martinvassolo

FROM PAGE 19A

## YOM KIPPUR

reservations at

[www.chabadofkendall.org](http://www.chabadofkendall.org).

- **Temple Emanu-El**, 1701 Washington Ave. in Miami Beach, will be open for members who reserve in advance, says Rabbi Marc Philippe. "Masks will have to be worn at all times. Families will sit together but must be 10 feet apart from other people. Restrooms will be disinfected after each use." Services will also be livestreamed on the temple's site and on its Facebook page if worshippers are more comfortable staying at home. For more information, visit [www.tesobe.org](http://www.tesobe.org) for log-on details or call the temple at 305-538-2503.

- **Temple Beth Shalom of Miami Beach** will livestream its services — including Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur — on its platform and via Facebook Live.

Information: [www.tbsmb.org/hhd/bts](http://www.tbsmb.org/hhd/bts). Says Rabbi Gayle Pomrantz: "We have reimagined the High Holy Days to touch people's lives through music, prayer, inspirational words and virtual gatherings to uplift and heal us in these unprecedented times. Our services will reflect the unique faces and voices of Temple Beth Shalom in song and in prayer."

- **Beth Shira Congregation** hosts High Holy Days @ Beth Shira virtual services

free and open to the community with reservations at [www.bethshira.org](http://www.bethshira.org). "We believe in the year of COVID, when so many are hurting in so many ways, that it is wrong to deprive High Holy Day services to anyone — especially if they cannot financially afford it," said Beth Shira's Rabbi Benjamin Herman in a statement.

- **Temple Israel of Greater Miami** hosts High Holy Days services virtually via Zoom. Visit [www.templeisrael.net](http://www.templeisrael.net) for details.

- **Aventura Turnberry Jewish Center** hosts a High Holy Days Drive-In experience on a 40-foot screen at Dezerland Park, 14401 NE 19th Ave., North Miami. Net'ilah Yom Kippur Night will be at 6 p.m. Monday, Sept. 28. These

experiences are included with members' paid annual commitment, but the center suggests a \$50 donation per car and registration is required. Non-members can sign up for \$180 at [www.aijc.org/event/drive-in](http://www.aijc.org/event/drive-in). Information on Aventura's livestreamed services at [www.aijc.org/high-holy-days-online-services](http://www.aijc.org/high-holy-days-online-services).

- **Alper Jewish Community Center** will hold a (Scape) Goat Yoga session, which will include a discussion of the ancient ritual on Sunday Sept. 27. There will be three sessions: family at 9 a.m.; teens at 10 a.m. and adults at 11 a.m. The cost is \$22 per person. Registration is required. To register visit [bit.ly/scapgoatyoga](http://bit.ly/scapgoatyoga).

- **Temple Sinai of North Dade** will live-

stream almost all of its services. For the past month, the synagogue has offered live, digital services, some prerecorded services and opportunities to be together in the sanctuary. Kol Nidre will be at 8 p.m. Sunday Sept. 27. Services will begin at 9:30 a.m. Monday Sept. 28 with a family service. For more information on the synagogue's services for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, visit <https://www.tsnd.org/hhd>.

- **Base Miami** is offering a holiday companion to help navigate the High Holy Days. The 22-page guide is full of readings, questions to ponder, and even offers holiday recipes.

- **Temple Judea in Coral Gables** will offer livestream services for Yom Kippur, some of

which will be available to the public. A virtual Yom Kippur Yizkor Service will be available to everyone at 5 p.m. Monday Sept. 28.

For more information visit <https://www.judeagables.org/hhd2020>.

- **Dor Chadash**, 9560 SW 107th Ave., Yom Kippur services are available on Zoom for free for members. It will be streamed live on the synagogue's Facebook page. For more information, visit [www.highholidays2020.org](http://www.highholidays2020.org).

- **Temple Beth Or's** Reimagined High Holy Days Journey will feature Yom Kippur services, and other programming, via Zoom. Visit [bethormiami.com/high-holidays](http://bethormiami.com/high-holidays) for information on registering and the various events.

## MIAMI BEACH

CITY OF MIAMI BEACH  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGSORDINANCES AMENDING: 1) THE  
ZONING DISTRICT CLASSIFICATION; 2)  
THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP (FLUM) OF  
THE MIAMI BEACH COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN; AND 3) THE LAND DEVELOPMENT  
REGULATIONS (LDR) JULIA TUTTLE  
CAUSEWAY DISTRICT FOR THE 4000  
ALTON ROAD EXPANSION(4000 ALTON ROAD,  
FRONTING 41ST STREET/I-195)OCTOBER 14, 2020  
CITY COMMISSION MEETING

The October 14, 2020 City of Miami Beach Commission Meeting will be held in the Commission Chamber, Third Floor, City Hall, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, Florida. Members of the public wanting to participate virtually may do so via video conferencing. To participate or provide comments virtually, the public may join the City Commission Meeting at: <https://miami-beach.zoom.us/j/87066995212> or via telephone at 1.929.205.6099 (US) or 888.475.4499 (Toll Free). The Webinar ID is: 87066995212. Members of the public wanting to virtually speak on an item during the City Commission Meeting, must click the "raise hand" icon if using the Zoom app or press "9" on the telephone to raise their hand.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the following First Readings/Public Hearings will be heard by the Mayor and City Commissioners of the City of Miami Beach, Florida, on October 14, 2020 at the following times, or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard:

## 1:50 p.m. First Reading Public Hearing

## 4000 ALTON ROAD EXPANSION - REZONING

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING DISTRICT MAP, REFERENCED IN SECTION 142-72 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, BY CHANGING THE ZONING DISTRICT CLASSIFICATION FOR THE PARCEL LOCATED ABUTTING 4000 ALTON ROAD AND FRONTING 41ST STREET/INTERSTATE 195, FROM THE CURRENT ZONING CLASSIFICATION OF GU, "GOVERNMENTAL USE", TO THE PROPOSED ZONING CLASSIFICATION OF RM-2, "RESIDENTIAL MULTIFAMILY, MEDIUM INTENSITY"; AND PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, REPEALER, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE. This Ordinance is being heard pursuant to Section 118-164 of the City's Land Development Code. Inquiries may be directed to the Planning Department at 305.673.7550.

## 1:45 p.m. First Reading Public Hearing

4000 ALTON ROAD EXPANSION - FLUM / COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT  
AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH,

FLORIDA, PURSUANT TO THE PROCEDURES IN SECTION 163.3187, FLORIDA STATUTES, TO AMEND THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP OF THE MIAMI BEACH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, BY CHANGING THE DESIGNATION FOR THE PARCEL LOCATED ABUTTING 4000 ALTON ROAD AND FRONTING 41ST STREET/INTERSTATE 195, FROM THE CURRENT DESIGNATION OF PF, "PUBLIC FACILITY: GOVERNMENT USE", TO THE PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF RM-2, "RESIDENTIAL MULTIFAMILY, MEDIUM INTENSITY"; PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; REPEALER; SEVERABILITY; AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE. This Ordinance is being heard pursuant to Section 118-164 of the City's Land Development Code. Inquiries may be directed to the Planning Department at 305.673.7550.

## 1:50 p.m. First Reading Public

4000 ALTON ROAD - LDR AMENDMENTS (JULIA TUTTLE CAUSEWAY DISTRICT)  
AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE CODE OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, AT SUBPART B, ENTITLED, "LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS," BY AMENDING CHAPTER 142 OF THE CITY CODE, ENTITLED "ZONING DISTRICTS AND REGULATIONS," ARTICLE II, ENTITLED "DISTRICT REGULATIONS," DIVISION 3, ENTITLED "RESIDENTIAL MULTIFAMILY DISTRICTS," SUB-DIVISION IV, ENTITLED "RM-2 RESIDENTIAL MULTIFAMILY, MEDIUM INTENSITY," CREATING SECTION 142-220, ENTITLED, "ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS FOR PROPERTIES THAT FRONT THE WEST SIDE OF ALTON ROAD AND THE JULIA TUTTLE CAUSEWAY," TO CREATE ZONING REGULATIONS FOR PROPERTIES LOCATED WITHIN SUCH AREA; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; REPEALER; SEVERABILITY; AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE. This Ordinance is being heard pursuant to Section 118-164 of the City's Land Development Code. Inquiries may be directed to the Planning Department at 305.673.7550.

INTERESTED PARTIES are invited to take part in this meeting or be represented by an agent. The public may submit written comments by sending an email to: [CityClerk@miamibeachfl.gov](mailto:CityClerk@miamibeachfl.gov) by 5:00 p.m. the day before the City Commission Meeting. Please identify the Agenda Item Number in the email subject line. Emails received will be forwarded to the Mayor and Commissioners and will be included as a part of the meeting record.

Copies of Agenda Items are available for public inspection at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/agenda-archive-main-page-2/>. This meeting, or any item therein, may be continued, and under such circumstances, additional legal notice need not be provided.

Pursuant to Section 286.0105, Fla. Stat., the City hereby advises the public that if a person decides to appeal any decision made by the City Commission with respect to any matter considered at its meeting or its hearing, such person must ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. This notice does not constitute consent by the City for the introduction or admission of otherwise inadmissible or irrelevant evidence, nor does it authorize challenges or appeals not otherwise allowed by law.

To request this material in alternate format, sign language interpreter (live-day notice required), information on access for persons with disabilities, and/or any accommodation to review any document or participate in any City-sponsored proceedings, call 305.604.2489 and select 1 for English or 2 for Spanish, then option 6; TTY users may call via 711 (Florida Relay Service).

The City Commission Meeting will be broadcast live on Miami Beach TV (MBTV), viewable on the City's website at <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/government/mbtv/>, as well as on Atlantic Broadband Cable channel 660, ATAT U-verse channel 99, HotWire Communications channel 395, and Roku device on PEG.1 TV channel, and on social media at <https://www.facebook.com/cityofmiamibeach>.

Rafael E. Granado, City Clerk  
City of Miami Beach

Ad 10142020-06