

Predatory Towing in Arlington

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Predatory Towing

- Trespass towing refers to towing arrangements in private parking lots, usually associated with commercial areas
- Predatory towing refers to active “policing” of the lots by towing companies
- Draconian towing policies harm customers and small businesses by driving customers away

TTAB

- The “Trespass Towing Advisory Board” meets once a year
- Its voting structure is dictated by Virginia State Law, with 7 voting members—a community “chair,” three police officers and three members from the towing companies
- The structure of the TTAB is skewed toward towing companies and not consumer interests

Current policy

- Currently towing companies have contracts with property owners that allows the towing company to “represent the owner.”
- Towing companies can tow vehicles without the consent of small business operators, whose interests are not the same as the property owner.
- Towing actually drives customers away!

Vehicle Owners

- If a vehicle owner returns to his car before the tow truck takes off, they can pay a \$25 “drop fee” to avoid paying a \$130-\$170 tow fee at the company lot.
- Some owners have complained that their vehicles were damaged by the tow company because they weren't securely hooked up, or were otherwise damaged in transit.

Columbia Heights Suggested Changes to County Ordinance

- Require two signatures before towing, one from the towing company and the second from an on-site business operator.
- Require the towing company to call information about the vehicle to the police prior to towing.
- Require the towing company to take photos of the vehicle from all four sides before hooking up the vehicle to be towed.

County Ordinance on Towing

- This Saturday the County Board will consider changes to the towing ordinance, with a vote at the December meeting.
- CHCA has instituted an on-line petition drive for the three changes, which were supported by the Chair of the TTAB and Arlington County Staff at the meeting.
- www.Columbiaheightsva.org