

TOWING PRESENTATION SUPPLEMENT FOR RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL PRESENTATION 12/15/2025

COMPOSED BY CALEB STEWART, 5TH DISTRICT RESIDENT



Section I: Advocacy/Actionable Items

Executive Summary: As Richmond experiences growth and expansion, the mechanisms of our local government must evolve to meet the challenges related to increased density, and to improve public perceptions of governmental effectiveness. One such historical issue faced by residents pertains to non-consensual towing, both as carried out by the city and private towing companies. Anecdotally, common sentiment indicates a lack of trust in current processes and accountability when dealing with city-initiated towing, dissatisfaction relating to predatory towing practices in the private sector, and a skepticism that complaints will result in any meaningful action. This report proposes a comprehensive package of potential reforms and action items focused on increasing transparency and fairness, reducing the rate of erroneous tows, establishing newly created or strengthening currently existing avenues of complaints and appeals, and protecting consumer rights.

The primary call to action for this issue is the establishment of a Towing Bill of Rights to enhance consumer protections for both public and private/trespass towing. Paired with: examining, clarifying, and streamlining existing city towing procedures; identifying gaps in service with our current towing contractor/subcontractors and working with them to ensure proper execution of the current goods and services contract (ord. 2024-137); and the creation of a swift, accessible complaint and appeal mechanism; these reforms would do well to restore public in towing practices city-wide.

Actionable items that will be advocated for are as follows:

- 1. To establish a “Towing Bill of Rights” to enhance consumer protections, both for public/city initiated and private/trespass towing to include:**
 - A clear breakdown of fees, and all related rights and protections already enumerated from the city and state, such as ability to retrieve items from vehicle regardless of payment status, methods of payments accepted, drop fee maximums, etc. This bill of rights would be mandated to be posted on towing websites, posted visibly at towing lots/offices, and handed out physically to vehicle owners along with receipts and bills. Note: If any of the below changes are codified, the additional protections passed would be incorporated into this Bill of Rights as well.
 - Mandating the release of vehicle within normal business hours once correct documentation is shown and fees paid. No arbitrary timeslots/appointments to pick up your car resulting in delayed release of vehicle/additional fees allowed.
 - Note: The VA State Corporation Commission’s latest study on towing in 2024 did recommend that a statewide Towing Bill of Rights be a potential action item. We have an opportunity to be proactive, we do not have to wait for the state to implement its own Towing Bill of Rights as VA localities already have the authority to regulate their own towing ordinances. (page 22 of SCC towing study source linked below)
<https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/v1/commissions/documents/ttab/new-folder/2024-va-scc-towing-fee-study.pdf>
- 2. Requiring photographic evidence of physical state of vehicle/evidence of violation/signage that led to towing to be easily accessible to citizens for both public and private towing both to enhance accountability, reduce claims of vehicle damage, and to reduce false claims of erroneous tows.**
 - This would include penalties for non-compliance/lack of photographic evidence, mandatory retention period of photographs, embedded date and timestamps, etc. Such practice is already

carried out by parking enforcement for certain ticketing and towing, but this practice should be mandated whenever possible for other city towing operations and for private companies as well.

- This practice is expressly allowed by VA code 46.2-1232 (Section C) “C. Any such local ordinance may also require towing and recovery operators to (i) obtain and retain photographs or other documentary evidence substantiating the reason for the removal”.

3. To encourage existing contractor and subcontractors to abide by all terms of the existing goods and services contract per ord. 2024-137, where pain points are noted in later sections of this research.

4. To research and examine the possible need for enhanced appeal/complaint mechanisms both for public/city towing and private towing. Current processes are:

- Too reliant upon litigation/court proceedings to finally resolve. Resolution is not able to be reached swiftly, with rapidly inflating storage fees and threat of liens being placed heavily incentivizing “pay now, fight it later” from the residents.
- Confusing to the average citizen, with being bounced around to person to person, from contractor to city employee, depending upon scenario. Confusion and delays lead to profit for the contractor/subcontractors, with little repercussions if found to have towed in error.
- One potential immediate action step could be requiring the current Advisory Board for the Assessment of Towing Fees and the Storage of Vehicles (i.e. towing Advisory Board), meetings to be recorded and posted to Registrar, (as currently all that is required is meeting minutes to be posted that are extremely succinct and not extremely informative)
- For police/city-initiated towing one solution may be to expand the role of the Towing Advisory Board with a new ordinance, to actually become involved in mediating towing complaints/appeals for police-initiated towing (similar to how the towing board in Fredericksburg, VA is structured, source on pg. 24 of this packet). Such an expansion of the board’s role is seemingly upon cursory research allowable under VA state law if not yet widely utilized by other localities.
- For private towing this may just involve increasing enforcement of existing ordinances or centralizing complaints of malpractice into one stream simply for visibility to administration if nothing else, or to be referred to the state level/AG.

5. To request a possible study or examination of towing operations, comparing practices and procedures with other similarly sized metropolitan cities for areas of improvements operationally for city-initiated tows (e.g. street cleaning, special events, etc.)

- There seems to be a gap between residents’ lived experiences with towing, and either the actual carrying out of current towing procedures, or the procedures themselves not meeting current needs. I.e. if we have requirements for signage for temporary street cleaning, are those actually being followed on the ground by contractors and employees, or the procedures need to themselves be streamlined for efficacy? There is a large gap between the public’s perception of how heavy handed the city is in regards to towing, what steps can even be taken if towing was carried out erroneously, and resident rights.

6. To establish a “know your rights” style campaign or communications so that members of the public are aware of their rights pertaining to towing, (especially breakdown of fees, avoiding cash-only payments, appropriate points of contact within the City, etc.)
7. Ban predatory “patrolling” of lots by private towing companies, i.e. only tows authorized by property owners or their employees should be conducted on a case-by-case basis.
 - This would SIGNIFICATLY reduce the amount of headaches faced by citizens in relation to private predatory towing, almost immediately.
 - Must specify that towing companies/operators themselves are barred from acting as an agent of the property owner for this purpose if enacted, to keep the company for authorizing their own tows.

SECTION II: ISSUES, REVIEWS, & COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Note: The following excerpts and reviews are a small sample of the most prevalent concerning issues encountered by residents when interacting with both city-initiated/public towing (i.e. Seibert's Towing and its subcontractors), and private towing companies. This is NOT a representative sample. Comments were pulled from various threads and review pages online. All are invited to do their own research to verify, and sources/links are provided, but anonymized for the purposes of focusing on trends and repeated patterns of conduct, so as to not focus on individual claims or grievances. The intent is not to focus on individual complaints but to pinpoint systematic issues to call for actionable items. Time was limited, so not every company was able to be thoroughly researched. Some issues are much more prevalent in private companies (e.g. theft, overinflating fees, only accepting cash), vs city-initiated tows (more lapses in process, lack of appeal processes, street-cleaning related confusion w/signage, etc.)

I. Erroneous tows

2y ago

Sieberts towing took my car out of the Wells Fargo parking lot on 2nd and Grace St illegally, twice. The signage clearly states parking for customers only, and I was a customer. The bank didn't even call them, so apparently they will come and steal anyone's car from anywhere, regardless of circumstances.

• 2y ago

Shank's in Richmond towed my car FROM MY RESERVED SPOT AT MY APARTMENT BUILDING TWICE (in Scott's addition). Both times they had to tow it back (who even knew they could do that!) and the hang tag was visible! I had to get the leasing office involved who had to get the owner involved for them to bring it back. The first time they had my car for 3 full days! When I called them they confirmed they had my car but wouldn't tell me why it was towed. They are the absolute worst!! The rule (and this is stated from the leading company) is that numbered, reserved spots are only towed if the assigned owner calls yet they completely ignored policy. Bloodsuckers!

• 2y ago

Watched sieberts move a car from a legally parked space place it in front of a no parking sign then they proceeded to take a picture and load the car back onto their truck. Fall 2023

★★★★★ 4 months ago

If I could give this establishment a zero I would. They are extremely predatory, unprofessional, and sketchy.

I just moved into this apartment complex yesterday and they towed one of my visitor's cars because they claimed they couldn't see the parking pass. Once they realized the parking pass was hanging onto the rearview mirror and was 100% accurate with date/time they decided that they'd only charge half price to take the vehicle out of impound. That is absolutely insane, and I'm going to reach out to my apartment complex or anyone that can help. This is a headache that no one wants to deal with **ESPECIALLY** during the moving process.

(Google review of J&R towing, a Seibert's subcontractor)

• 2y ago

Last year my car was parked on the street outside my apartment overnight. I parked there around 6pm when I got home, went out the next day around 12pm and my car had been towed.

The street I parked on is not metered and has no signs saying "2hr parking" or anything to that effect, it's a residential area and free-for-all parking except 9-11am on Mondays for street cleaning. It was not a Monday, and that was the only sign there. I check for temporary signs religiously because I've been burned by Richmond's parking enforcement one too many times.

Siebert's either illegally towed my car (most likely situation) or somehow there was a temporary no parking sign put up AND taken down in the 18hrs my car was sitting there.

When I went to get my car I told them my car had been wrongfully towed and they were rude and told me to "take it up with the city", which there's really no way to do.

• 2y ago

sieberts towed me twice in 2009 for street cleaning signs being posted- both times they towed me on days the sign wasn't even applicable for.

• 2y ago

My car was towed last February by seiberts off mulberry and cary with literally zero signage. I used to work at the coffee shop there and parked on mulberry everyday. I was always privy to all the road closures scheduled for street cleanings, seeing as a I was barista and couldn't afford the towing bill. Still got got. I fucking hate seiberts with every fiber of my being.

• 2y ago

Siebert's towed my car from a lot that I had bought a spot in. I had the sticker on my car and a card hanging from my mirror. They towed it at night, so I had to pay extra to get my car back the next day, and I had to pay the fee to park my car in the lot the very next day.

II. Damage to vehicles

• 2y ago

2016 Pierce Arrow seemingly for no reason I can determine to this day, called Sieberts to come tow my car from the spot I'd been paying for the 3 years prior. Due to the nature of my cars positioning, the tow guy pulled it out while parking break was on and completely burned my clutch out. \$6000.00 bill; fought with Pierce Arrow for months until giving up and breaking lease early. F sieberts and f Pierce Arrow

• 2y ago

Used to valet cars at Morton's and the apartment building on 13th/Virginia Ave would have people park there and come to the restaurant. I think Seibert's was contracted to tow unauthorized vehicles from the lot. Anyways, dude in a BMW ignores our warning about the lot and goes to dinner. Towing company comes rolling through and about 15 min later here they come with the BMW, except as they roll out of the intersection there's a dip and as they hit it the car started rolling off the back and fell, peeling the entire front end of the car up like a sardine tin. The guys wrangled with it for a while in the intersection and then drove it back to the lot and put it back where they found it. I dont know if the the guy ever found out exactly what happened to his car, as my shift ended before he came out.

↑ 12 ↓

• 2y ago

One Friday night, I was parked on broad st across from the broadberry (where I usually park) the night before a marathon. There was a tiny sign halfway down the block stating that there was no parking for that night for the marathon that I didn't see (for obvious reasons). When I came back out, my car was gone. Seiberts had towed my car. When I went to pick it up, there were many others with similar stories picking up their cars. After I paid the \$120 fine, I finally got my car back, and it was grinding and clunking in the back. I pulled to the front and talked to someone about the condition of my car. She said to leave it there to be looked at on Monday, and if it was towing related damage, they would fix it free of charge. Turns out, they towed my 4 wheel drive vehicle with the back tires on the ground inside of a flat bed and destroyed my differential. Needless to say, I took my car to a different shop to be fixed. Seiberts is supposed to reimburse my insurance for the repairs and me for the \$500 deductible. That was back in early November, and I still haven't been reimbursed..

↑ 7 ↓

★★★★★ a month ago

Towest my car during street cleaning -- and caused THOUSANDS worth of damage to the car. I'm a broke single mom. Real nice.

(Seibert's Towing Google Review)

★★★★★ 6 months ago

1 star because I can't put 0.

The tow driver at least admitted to the manager that he damaged my Macan GTS when he dropped it off the bed of the truck and allowed the front fascia to slam onto the edge of the truck bed..

I'd like to see their faces when they see the repair bill is going to cost them nearly 10x what the tow earned them.

They also said "there's no way we damaged the wheel." But clearly there's a linear (not curved) yellow streak across my tire from them dragging it across the curb paint. That is right next to the new scratches on my black wheels making it VERY obvious that they were also at fault.

(Seibert's Towing Google Review)

★★★★★ 2 months ago

they have towed my car twice from my complex with a valid parking pass. ive paid both times since even tho the pass was visible it had fell down on the seat, today i retrieved my car and its making a rattling/grinding sound AND my skid plate was hanging off ripped snd dragging. This place is seriously messed up and i will be reporting this to my apartments as well. They clearly cant properly tow a car. Out of every car in the parking lot with no sticker or parking pass they towed mine probably because of the out of state tags. These people are terrible and they do not know how to properly tow a vehicle my car is all scraped up. THEY ALSO TOWED MY FWD CAR BACKWARDS WHICH CAN CAUSE DAMAGE TO THE TRANSMISSION !! I WORK ON CARS SO I KNOW A LOT OF THIS STUFF ! it takes a lot of force to rip off that skid plate ! ive had this car for years and have gotten it towed for repair reasons. i wasn't even mad about my car being towed because i forgot to put back up the parking pass, until i realized the damage. a car thats really illegally parked and being towed doesnt even give grounds for you to damage it.

(Google review for J&R towing, a Seibert's subcontractor)

III. Pressure to sell car title to towing company to discharge debt/Liens being placed without contacting owner.

• 2y ago

Oh like when **Sieberts** had my ex's car for 4 days and charged her twice what the car was worth (legit twice KBB value) and when she said she couldn't afford that they PROMPTLY gave her a 2nd option of paying a small fee to transfer the title of the car to them... how that's not theft I don't know, and they never explained their charges. A few thousand for 4 days of towing and storage, yet they were happy AF to get the title. Car was an Isuzu Rodeo, and the tow/ storage bill was a few thousand for FOUR DAYS. Just do your whole story on Sieberts. The material is there.

0 Up 291 Down

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ a year ago

They are crooked and will attempt to steal your car by towing your vehicle and then charging more in impound fees than the car is worth. If you push back on this, they will offer to transfer the car to their ownership for a small fee, to avoid the thousands in impound fees they applied. Total scam. Total crooks.

(Seibert's Towing Google Review)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ a year ago

If you're considering using Seibert's Towing, don't. Run far, far away. This is hands down one of the most unethical and incompetent businesses I've ever dealt with. Their practices are not just unprofessional—they are predatory and seem designed to exploit people in already stressful situations.

Following an accident, my vehicle was towed by Seibert's Towing. Within three days they filed a lien through the DMV for an unpaid bill. Let me be clear: they made absolutely no effort to contact me, the vehicle owner, or my insurance company to arrange payment before slapping a lien on the car. It's clear this is a deliberate tactic to extort money from people who are already vulnerable.

On November 20, 2024, I paid the bill in full. At that time, I also paid them to re-tow the vehicle to a repair facility. You'd think that after taking my money—twice—they'd follow through with the job, right? Wrong. It's now six days later (November 26th), and my vehicle is still sitting exactly where it was.

Despite making multiple phone calls, I've been met with nothing but excuses and empty promises. Every time I call, it's more time on hold and more excuses. Here we are, days later, and they still haven't bothered to move it. It's blatant disregard for their obligations.

Seibert's Towing is exceptionally bad at their job. But it's not just incompetence—it's greed. From their predatory lien practices to their failure to deliver on paid services, it's clear this company is only interested in grabbing as much money as they can from people who have no choice but to deal with them.

★★★★★ a year ago

After an accident cleanup: Ridiculous business practice of establishing a lien through the DMV on a towed vehicle after 72 hours for unpaid bill without attempting to contact anyone (owner or insurance company) to pay the bill. Lien threatens that the vehicle will be sold at auction to pay the unpaid bill. This occurs 72 hours without even attempting to provide a bill to the owner or the insurance company.

(Seibert's Towing Google Review)

Looking for legal help against Seiberts Towing

If there are any lawyers who have been burned by Seiberts Towing in [Richmond, Virginia](#), I have a case against them based on a fraudulent Motor Storage and Lean Application, which in turn gave them the false right to auction off my Ford F150 within 30 days of towing my car for street cleaning.

<https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/.../files/forms/vsa41.pdf>

I was unable to get proof of RETURN RECEIPTS of notifying the current owner (me) via certified postal mail from the Office for MSLs or the DMV. Both said they should exist but don't. This step MUST happen for a MSL application to get approved. This means Seiberts is towing vehicles, not alerting the owners and they applied for an MSL on my truck THE DAY after towing it for street cleaning. This towing company even has their own auction house to streamline their fraudulent process.

I've been doing a lot of leg work on this paper trail and finally found why I never heard about my towing until it was too late... despite the bigger picture being that Seiberts claimed a title on my car for a STREET CLEANING INFRACTION.

I also think it's pretty insane the RPD investigated this since March as a stolen vehicle and it took them until last week to let me know the towing company they contract is the reason I no longer own my vehicle.

(Reddit post regarding Seibert's towing)

IV. Lack of appeal process/help by the Police/assistance w/ erroneous tows

• 2y ago

In 2010 I had [Siebert's](#) steal my legally parked car. I came out to find it missing, thinking my car was stolen by a thief because I was parked legally and there were no signs anywhere and another car was parked in my place. I called the police to report the theft only to find out that it had been taken by Siebert's. They could not justify why my car was towed as there was no legal pretext, but would not let me have my vehicle until I paid them. Essentially they stole my car, held it hostage, and told me that for every day I left it there I would be racking up new charges. I called the police and was told that they weren't in the business of making sure towing companies don't illegally take people's vehicles and that if I wanted to take it up contact a lawyer. That company has been allowed to act with impunity by the city and their abuse of their position has been rampant for decades.

• 2y ago

Seiberts. Towed my car that was legally parked at the river. Had a cop tell me that it was legally parked but that he can't do anything about it. Seiberts told me that if I didn't like it, I could go to court but had to pay the fee to get my car or it would incur storage fees. Like people can take a day off work to fight a towing fee. It's crap. They absolutely do this on purpose cause most people can't afford to fight it and the few that do only get their money back but no damages for lost wages or anything so it doesn't cost Seiberts anything to take cars that are parked legally. The city should do better about their towing contract. And complaints to the city attorney go nowhere. Seems like there is probably a kickback scheme involved in the whole situation. But who can prove it.

57

9 • 2y ago

Siebert's towed my car last December due to what I like to call a "pop up no parking zone" for some "street cleaning" (probably just a guy walking down the street with a leaf blower). I have my doubts that a sign was ever posted, but if it was, it was MAYBE one day in advance. Because I ride my bike to work everyday but leave my car on the street, I'm extremely exposed to these "pop up no parking zones" because I don't check on and/or move my car every single day.

My biggest grievance is that when you get towed, you are completely at the mercy of these assholes. They have a very clever system set up where if you go to the police/city they say "it's Siebert's who towed you, talk to them" but then Siebert's can say "well it's the city's no parking policies / street cleaning schedule, so talk to them." In the end no one will help you, and you will have no choice but to ask a friend to drive or take an expensive cab/Uber all the way out to the lot and pay the >\$100 towing fee (much, much more if multiple days went by - god forbid you were traveling or something). Huge props to the person in this thread who actually went to a judge, stuck it out in court, and got their money back.

I'm lucky enough that I could just eat the cost of getting towed and move on with my life, as angry as I was. But for a lot of people... being out \$100+ and no access to their car? That would be a near death sentence.

0 4

2y ago

Imagine a Richmond Detective asking you why it took so long to realize my truck was missing. Pointing out to them that I was never alerted, and them telling you its a civil matter now. When backing up and looking at the bigger picture (a truck I just paid off and put a new engine in, doesn't belong to me anymore because of street cleaning), they agreed it was wrong but didn't care.

(Reddit comment regarding Siebert's towing)

V. Theft of Items from Cars

• 2y ago

Seiberts stole weed out of my car. (My whole purse was in the passenger seat but only the weed was missing) my wallet and phone were both in said purse so how was I supposed to pay? I asked to use their phone so I could call someone to help. They said no but there is a pay phone nearby. Told me to walk a half a mile to the nearest shopping center. There had not been a pay phone there for what appeared to be years. When I went back they said eh sorry you can use our phone. \$102 later I eventually got to my car. And my purse was thrown on the floor with everything thrown on the ground EXCEPT the one thing I wanted after that horrible day... my beloved bud.

• 2y ago

No Limit towed my fiancee's car from our apartment's back lot despite a clearly visible decal. When asked why they made up a lie about out of state plates being illegal and held her car hostage while we got payment which they insisted had to be in cash. They patronized us, acting like they were doing us a favor the whole time by saving us from the car being impounded and coming in on Sunday to give us back the car. I've lived here for over 15 years and knew full well they were lying about out of state plates being illegal but felt they had us over a barrel. We paid it and drove home furious but at least had the car

Here's where it gets fun: my fiancee has a concealed carry permit, and her registered handgun was in the car at the time. Someone had clearly rummaged through the car, papers were everywhere, and wouldn't you know it her handgun was missing. Turns out No Limit stole it and immediately flipped it to a pawn shop (I guess they assumed it was an illegal firearm and that we wouldn't go to the police about it). It was recovered by RPD and had to be handed off to her home state police where it was registered (she had moved here recently and hadn't had time to change it over). RPD talked to us maybe twice about it and seemed to promptly forget about us despite, y'know, a GUN being involved.

Search No Limit Towing on Google News and you'll get some interesting results, truly shitty people.

(Note: No Limit Towing was later convicted for various criminal activities related to fraudulent towing)

★★★★★ 9 months ago

These people are thieves they took my car with the emergency on i asked the guy to please stop so I can take the emergency off but he kept going also took 100 dollars from my wallet when i asked for the guys name he refused. I will file a complain against this thieves.

(Google review for J&R Towing, Seibert's subcontractor)

VI. The implication or threat of violence (most prevalent in private towing)

• 2y ago

Twice Simms towing took our car out of the lot. First time we were told that towing was suspended and we didn't have to worry about it. Second time our parking pass was broken and laying on the dash and they took the car. Went to pick it up and was greeted with a hand on a LARGE gun. Website says that they are closed Sunday, they are not. When I mentioned that was sketchy he said he could keep my car if he wanted to.

0 22

• 2y ago

Yes! During the lockdown my car was towed from my apartment lot. I was working from home at the time and didn't have to drive many places, so I didn't notice for something like five days. The fees I'd racked up at that point were so expensive. All the more frustrating was that I was towed for out-of-date registration, but my registration was up-to-date: the stickers had just either peeled off or been stolen (I had an issue later where my license plates were stolen from the same lot, so it may have been the latter). They didn't care when I was able to produce my registration. I was told that because the stickers hadn't been on my front plate, my car was in violation of the parking guidelines and therefore fair game. Edit: the company was Simm's.

12

• 2y ago

I think Simms is used by my apartment complex because once my parking sticker fell down and I got towed. Once I arrived to get my car, I too was met immediately with a gun (I believe two and a threatening sign). The dude just had the gun lying on the desk pointing at the direction of the open door.

5

• 2y ago

My partner and I parked in the 711 parking lot behind Christians on Harrison to get sodas and pizza, and an employee of final notice came up and started threatening us for parking in the 711 lot. He was yelling and bright red because he thought we had gone to Christian's, however he was screaming at us... while we were holding big gulps and 711 bags. We had simply walked the wrong way at first. He threatened violence and to tow us while we were in the car, and when I complained to the company they just laughed.

0 31

VII. Charging excessive drop fees in violation of state/local laws



ago

I got charged a \$300 drop fee from whoever tows for 7 Eleven on grace next to Village Cafe. Driver was threatening me saying it would be higher if I had to pick it up from the lot. I'm convinced that he pocketed at least \$200, and can't believe that I paid it at the time but I had to get to work.

As I read all the reviews I noticed the perfect reviews, come from customers whom called to request towing. Eric was very aggressive, as he ran back to his tow truck, quickly rolling up his window, driving off, after hooking up my elderly mother's car in broad daylight, as I was visibly trying to get his attention, I then throw up each of my arms, in disbelief. Eric, then rolled down the window, aggressively saying "Do not talk to me unless you are going to pay the fee to drop this car down!", I asked Eric why speak to me this way, I am a person, also. I then started videoing, once he seen the phone, the cost of dropping the vehicle went from \$50 to \$40. The vehicle was retrieved, note: there wasn't any signs stating "parking was not allowed". I then called J & R, Kerry answered, she was NOT customer service friendly either, I then asked to speak to the owner. JeNay, the owner called me back, her tone was much more customer service friendly. I say all this to state "Without customer service, companies will not thrive". How associates act in front of their superiors, should be how they continue to treat others throughout the day, not Go from being a devil, to an Angel, when the owner get involved. "Have to do better managing JeNay", whether it's a tow, in the right or wrong, your employees should always keep it professional. ***Customer Service is *** We are why you are still in business. Thank you for your time. All Love Here.

(Google review of J&R towing, Seibert's subcontractor)

VIII. Accepting Only Cash



2y ago

Wanted to pay for my towed car with my credit card - they only took cash for no proof of registration ownership and wouldn't allow me to use my credit card.

I told them my proof of registration was in the glove box - in the car that they towed - in their caged lot - and to let me get to my car to get said paperwork to prove my ownership so I could pay with card and get my car back.

They still said no. Had to take an extra Uber to get cash - to pay for my car - that they wouldn't let me open the car door to prove it was my car i owned to pay with credit card...

I feel less intelligent after even typing this out. Towing companies suck.

(Company unknown)

★★★★★ 7 months ago

Parked in my buddy's apartment lot without a pass and got towed this time. Called the number on the sign for the lot at 1:00 am, they had a night crew setup to answer and provide information. They let me know the opening hours and that there would be a \$180 charge and to bring cash. In the morning I got there and called the number again, someone promptly came out to help me. They asked for my ID, filled out the proper paperwork, accepted my payment without trying to add on any other charges, and let me have my car no problem. I checked afterward, no damage to my car and nothing missing or gone through. They're not located in the best looking area, and I kinda wish they accepted card. But I wouldn't say they deserve only 1 star reviews.

(Simms Towing Google review)

★★★★★ 3 months ago

Absolutely predatory, will disregard parking passes and tow anyways. Refuses to accept any payment but cash so you can't dispute the charges with your bank

(Google review of J&R Towing, a Seibert's subcontractor)

★★★★★ a year ago

So let's be honest. This place here is not 24hours. I called at 4am -5am. Mind you I'm watching a guy tow the car away and tried to ask for the hours of operation for the office but he just drove away and smiled. When I called the lady said they "have to" say 24hours for towing purposes but we have different hours. Now riddle me this, if you're only 9-5 then say that on here. I had no problem paying to get my car out but then they have a sign saying no card only cash. But then ask if I'm paying card or cash. They remind me of McDonalds when the ice cream machine is always broken.

(Google review of J&R Towing, a Seibert's subcontractor)

IX. Miscellaneous/One-offs

2y ago

Used to valet cars at Morton's and the apartment building on 13th/Virginia Ave would have people park there and come to the restaurant. I think Seibert's was contracted to tow unauthorized vehicles from the lot. Anyways, dude in a BMW ignores our warning about the lot and goes to dinner. Towing company comes rolling through and about 15 min later here they come with the BMW, except as they roll out of the intersection there's a dip and as they hit it the car started rolling off the back and fell, peeling the entire front end of the car up like a sardine tin. The guys wrangled with it for a while in the intersection and then drove it back to the lot and put it back where they found it. I dont know if the the guy ever found out exactly what happened to his car, as my shift ended before he came out.

↑ 12 ↓

2y ago

Sieberts was towing for street sweeping day. I saw Sieberts pull up with a street legal dirt bike on the bed of the truck. They wanted to make room for a jeep, so they took the bike off and put it in the grass next to the road. Then put the jeep on the bed of the truck, left the bike, and continued on with their towing. Who knows where the bike came from, but it wasn't from our neighborhood. It sat there in the grass for most of a year. Owner probably thought it was stolen.

⊖ ↑ 26 ↓

A General Note on Customer Service Issues:

While a generally pervasive trend of lackluster customer service, hostility, rudeness, and/or at the very least uncooperativeness was originally going to be included in these exhibits, examples became too numerous to adequately convey the volume of, and in light of the fact that most interactions stem from non-consensual tows, not wholly useful to include, BUT the trend should still be noted. Most residents interact with towing in stressful situations, so tensions are often high from the outset, with towing employees on the defensive. Working a customer facing job, whether in a tow office, or as a tow truck operator, is a difficult task, so the constant battle of upset customers, irritable drivers/office staff, and lack of any clear and efficient means of appeal is an ongoing cycle. However, it is my belief that with enhanced consumer protections, more efficient complaint/appeal mechanisms, less confusing processes, and increased public trust, these customer service issues could be significantly reduced, both across private and city-initiated towing. Our current towing contract ord. 2024-137 also notes that the contractor is expected to give good customer service, but this is seemingly hard to measure when you are performing most of your public facing services non-consensually, making measuring performance of the contractor in regards to customer service difficult.

Summary of Issues

From a cursory look at the different companies, typical issues faced, and landscape of the industry in general, it seems there are a host of issues some with enforcement of existing ordinances/state laws, and the need for stronger consumer protections mostly on the private end, and the issues noted with city initiated/public/police related are more so an issue with processes, heavy-handedness, coordination gaps, and lack of appropriate and swift appeal/complaint mechanisms.

A typical negative interaction with private towing may look something like this:

1. Resident parks in private lot, prowling tow truck driver is waiting for them to leave to tow away quickly or perhaps resident lives in an apartment complex and parking pass falls off mirror
2. Resident catches truck in time before truck leaves lot, driver states they will drop the car for an inflated drop fee that is higher than state/city ordinance allows, and demands it in cash only to avoid a record of this prohibited act
3. Resident does not pay this inflated fee or does not catch the tow truck on time. Resident then shows up at lot the next day to pay fee and collect vehicle, or protest the tow. Resident is met with a general attitude of hostility and uncooperativeness. If the resident states that they believe their car to be improperly towed they may even have physical violence implied or threatened, if not a “take it up with us in court” approach.
4. At this point the clock is ticking and fees are accruing each day, the resident’s only options are to pay now and try some means of restitution later, or attempt to convince the towing company to release the car, often futilely.
5. 9/10 times the resident pays and grits their teeth. They may have no hard photographic proof that the tow was erroneous if it was, and even if the tow was not erroneous, at best case scenario they are out hundreds of dollars if they did not catch the car being towed. If the tow was erroneous, they may try to file a complaint via the State AG’s towing complaint form or through the state’s consumer protection hotline, which will usually not result in anything concrete happening to the company as a whole, or pursue small claims court to recover the towing fees, (assuming they have the time and energy to take off of work, which again many do not so they will not pursue)...and the cycle continues.

A typical negative experience with a city initiated tow may look something like this:

1. Resident has their car towed because they were unaware of a special event such as a marathon, street cleaning they were unaware of, etc.
2. Resident calls non-emergency police number as they think their car may have been stolen, and is informed car has been towed, or alternatively checks the towing dashboard and see their car has indeed been towed.
3. If the resident believes the tow to be erroneous, due for instance to unclear signage, they contractor will refer the citizen to an employee at the city, who will state that the tow was for just cause, and that they are unable to refund the towing fees, and to contest the towing fees in court.

Section III: Connecting towing reforms to the Mayor's Action Plan:

The need for towing reforms can be connected to the values listed in the Mayoral Action Plan (Published Oct. 2025) as follows:

MAP Values

“Integrity - We deal honestly with one another. We welcome accountability from others and hold ourselves accountable to policy and stated expectations. We ask for feedback. We are responsible for what we say, how we say it, and what we say with our actions.”

Commentary: The average Richmond resident, it is evident, does not feel as if they receive honesty and accountability regarding non-consensual towing, either private or city-initiated. The feedback on this issue from residents, if properly gathered would be voluminous and the need for reform would be very clear.

“Encouragement - We encourage one another. We actively work to create a positive and safe environment in which to work, learn, fail, improve, and serve.”

Commentary: Evidently we've got the failing part down, now we must work on the learning and improving parts :)

“Excellence - We are focused on high standards of quality service delivery for the sake of our City, its residents, businesses and visitors, and not the credit we will receive.”

Commentary: The services provided both in regards to customer facing interactions from drivers/office staff, damage to vehicles, misleading hours of operations, etc. are not living up to the high quality sought. One could argue in many cases they do not rise even to the level of adequate, but that is up to each person to decide for themselves after gathering information.

“Equity - We acknowledge that cultural differences and power dynamics of the many aspects of our identities are real and likely to impact our interactions. We commit to the hard work of equity and inclusion, identifying and removing barriers while including all voices to participate in shaping the future. We believe we have much to learn from those we work with and serve alongside. We seek to work together to build systems that are fair and just, taking into account the unique needs and strengths of each community.”

Commentary: Building systems that are fair and just is absolutely imperative to increase public trust. The current lack of a swift appeal or complaint mechanisms stand in stark opposition to this stated value, and there is work to be done separately on ensuring procedures are created to enhance public trust, and already existing processes are followed for city initiated tows, and existing ordinances followed by private operators.

“Partnership - We will seek to partner with, collaborate with, and build up other organizations and people, even when it is hard or messy. We assume positive intent of others. We believe better work gets done when we work together.”

Commentary: One must be careful to not assume all private companies or our contractors are acting in bad faith, but that at the least processes need to be strengthened, and consumer protections are warranted. We may also collaborate with these companies for solutions where possible.

A thriving City Hall:

In reference to “*Goal A: Do the basics better: Improve core operations of City government*” it specifically calls for increases in “*the contract compliance rate*”

In reference to “*Goal C: Keep standards high: Promote continuous improvement and professional development.*” it calls for “*Improvements to outdated processes.*”

In reference to “*Goal F: Improve resident satisfaction and trust in City government*” it calls for “*An increase in residents who report feeling their local government is responsive to problems and taking steps to address needs.*”

MAP Goals

Thriving Neighborhoods: Meet the housing needs of a growing city, so that Richmonders across different income levels can access affordable housing in safe neighborhoods with strong public amenities.

Commentary: As the city grows, it stands to follow the volume of complaints, erroneous tows, and frustration with current processes will grow if left unchanged. It is incumbent upon us all, while we have the opportunity to enhance consumer protections, dissuade bad actors, or clear up confusing processes or misalignments in practice before issues reach a boiling point. Another point that cannot be understated is the disproportionate impact an erroneous tow can have on residents of low-income, who do not often times have the resources or time to contest erroneous tows through the court system/afford to take off work to contest tows, and who when faced with losing a form of transportation face catastrophic consequences.

Thriving Families: Support the education, health, and development of children and families — in and out of the classroom — so that students graduate from Richmond Public Schools well-prepared for success and connected to opportunities for further learning and career development.

Commentary: One would be remiss in pointing out it is extremely difficult to transport one’s child to and from school with no transport due to a towed vehicle (if you are a part of the large portion of parents who drive their children to school as opposed to walking/bussing).

A Thriving Economy: Support small and minority-owned businesses and employers providing quality, living-wage job opportunities. Create pathways for disadvantaged residents to move from poverty to stability to wealth building, and direct investments to historically neglected neighborhoods.

Commentary: The towing of a resident’s vehicle (and incurring significant fees, and possibly a lien if left unpaid) would be one of the greatest potential threats to moving from poverty to stability, therefore this issue has a direct impact on this stated Mayoral goal.

Section IV: Applicable State Laws

Note: Any claims or analyses are to be taken with a grain of salt, and were conducted by a layman, all are encouraged to doublecheck and research other applicable laws for reference and to see if any advocated for reforms are feasible

I. VA code § 46.2-118. Prohibited acts by tow truck drivers and towing and recovery operators.

(B) (5)

5. Obtain any fee by fraud or misrepresentation;

- **Commentary:** Bait and switch tactics (quoting one price, then arriving to scene and charging a higher price), misrepresenting state/local laws, or charging for services not actually rendered would be examples of common practices that would violate this law.

(B) (8)

8. Fail to accept for payment cash, insurance company check, certified check, money order, or at least one of two commonly used, nationally recognized credit cards, except those towing and recovery operators who have an annual gross income of less than \$10,000 derived from the performance of towing and recovery services shall not be required to accept credit cards, other than when providing police-requested towing as defined in § 46.2-1217, but shall be required to accept personal checks;

- **Commentary:** Many companies are seemingly failing to offer methods of payment other than cash, in violation of state law and Richmond ordinance. Many are private, but a few are subcontractors under our existing City contract w/ Seibert's.

(B) (19)

19. Refuse to allow, consistent with the protections detailed in the provisions of subsection E of § 46.2-644.01, the owner of the vehicle towed, upon proof of ownership of the vehicle, to access and recover any personal items without retrieving the vehicle and without paying any fee;

- **Commentary:** There have been reported instances where this has been not followed, or catch-22 instances where physical proof of ownership is in the vehicle itself, which the resident is not allowed to retrieve, as they are not able to easily prove ownership...often resulting in

them leaving to look for alternative methods of proof, incurring further storage fees due to having to return a later day.

46.2-1217 - Local governing body may regulate certain towing

- Commentary: This is the VA law that established the need for local towing boards to be consulted prior to any rate increases/contracts for police initiated towing.

46.2-1233 Localities may regulate towing fees

- Commentary: This grants the governing body of any locality the power to set reasonable limits on fees charged for the removal of motor vehicles left on private property.

Virginia Consumer Protection Act (VCPA) Title 59.1 Ch. 17

- Commentary: Many predatory towing practices especially by private companies would fall under acts prohibited by the VCPA, although enforcement is often hard to chase down and not of the highest priority

Section V: Applicable Richmond Ordinances

I. 2024-137 (Goods and Services Contract regarding Seibert's Towing)

- Section 1.5 “Performance Evaluations” (H) (PDF pg. 20)

1.5 **Performance Evaluations.** Performance evaluation of the Contractor shall take place no less than once per year. The City’s Vendor Performance Evaluation Form shall be used for each evaluation and results shall be on record and distributed to the Contractor. The City will consider the following performance criteria as part of any performance evaluation:

H. Whether the Contractor has provided quality customer service to citizens and City staff.

- Point of Inquiry: How is the city gathering data to accurately gauge Seibert’s (and its subcontractors’) level of customer service to citizens specifically? Does the city proactively seek out data/survey/gauge issues proactively or do individual issues arise, which are then handled on a case-by-case basis? Where are the records of these evaluations of the contractor and what methods of measuring their performance have actually been utilized, not just what is allowed in the contract?

Ord. 2025-222

(b) The maximum fee that may be charged for the storage of such passenger cars, trailers and other vehicles is \$50.00 per 24-hour period. However, no fee for the storage of such passenger cars, trailers and other vehicles may be charged for the first 24-hour period, nor for any period during which recovery was prevented because the towing and recovery business was closed.

Point of Inquiry: A tactic that one company uses is to establish “time slots” of 15 minutes that must be used to pick up your vehicle, and if you “miss” a timeslot, you are forced to wait until the next timeslot the following hour (e.g. 3:00–3:15, next slot 4:00-4:15). Is this practice prohibited by ordinance/state law, or is there further legislation needed to prevent such practice?

2021 Annual Towing Board Report

In the 2021 Annual Report: Advisory Board for the Assessment of Towing Fees and the Storage of Vehicles (used to advise on the contract modification to raise rates for city initiated/public towing in 2021) It was stated that:

“The Tow Advisory Board has not received any complaints alleging improper towing charges in the last several years.”

Point of inquiry:

- Was this an implication that the board is able to receive complaints regarding towing, (even if only as an FYI?) from citizens, when they have issues or disputes regarding towing by the city contractor/subcontractors?
- If the board was indeed able to receive complaints from citizens, what would they use this information for? Pretty much just for consideration the next time they had to advise on a rate increase or contract renewal presumably, as they are not a regulatory body? If this is the case, what volume of customer issues would warrant them to advise AGAINST a rate increase or against the renewal of a particular contract?
- Personal commentary: To imply that the board has received no complaints, so they recommend proceeding with a rate increase as requested, would seem to imply that they are even in the business of being sent complaints to begin with. The board does not have a direct email address, nor is there any information online that advises you to take issues to this board, even simply to let them know, for their FYI.

Section VI: Miscellaneous progressive towing reforms in other localities/states

In Colorado, towing companies:

- Must prior to connecting to a vehicle, photographically document the vehicle's condition and the reason for the tow. Not only are photos merely kept to defense against claims or for inquiries, but indeed **failure to produce documentation** of the vehicle's condition or the reason for the tow **creates a presumption** that any damages to the vehicle were caused by the carrier or that the tow was not authorized (HB22-1314). Other cities such as Chicago (Municipal Code 9-84-025), Philadelphia (HB816), Tucson (Ord. No. 12055), etc. have similar, common-sense laws that require photographs be taken prior to towing, available to vehicle owner, to decrease claims of vehicle damage/improper signage, etc.
- Are prohibited from towing from private properties without giving 24-hour notice for many infractions (HB22-1314).
- Must release a vehicle upon the owner paying 15 percent of the fees or \$60, whichever is less, as long as they sign a form stating they still owe the remainder of the balance of the fees (HB22-1314).
- Are prohibited from patrolling private lots seeking cars to tow (HB24-1051).

In Illinois:

- For recovered stolen vehicles, towing companies must notify owners within two business days via certified mail and cannot charge storage fees for vehicles reclaimed within the first seven days (SB2040).

In Chicago:

- Towing operators must also (similar to Colorado) take pictures of vehicles prior to towing, and tow trucks are required to have onboard dash-cams. This reduces insurance claims and claims of driver abuse

In Philadelphia:

- The city may perform “courtesy tows”, moving a residents’ cars only a short distance away to the next available parking spot that is not in the way of the special event or street cleaning, to prevent residents from having to incur storage fees or having to go to a tow yard.

In San Francisco:

- The city has a courtesy, “text before tow” program, wherein the city (for certain minor infractions) will text a citizen to move their car, prior to a tow-truck arriving to give them an opportunity to move their car and not incur towing/storage fees, but still have to pay the original ticket. Residents are able to register voluntarily, and the notification is out of courtesy only.

Section VII: Sources

General complaint thread of towing practices in RVA

https://www.reddit.com/r/rva/comments/1cbatud/reporter_looking_for_towing_company_horror_stories/

Seibert's towing google page/reviews

<https://share.google/B9ClzJ4CMmsMV27IX>

Final Notice Towing thread

https://www.reddit.com/r/rva/comments/17uundo/final_notice_towing_are_thieves/

Misc. Sieberts Towing thread

https://www.reddit.com/r/rva/comments/16ddbgw/looking_for_legal_help_against_seiberts_towing/

J&R Towing google page/reviews

<https://share.google/fuksYfJsbJrLZYo2H>

Kansas City Towing Bill of Rights example

<https://www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/public-works/parking-kc/tow-services/tow-bill-of-rights>

Colorado towing law HB22-1314

<https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb22-1314>

Pennsylvania state towing law

<https://www.palegis.us/legislation/bills/2023/hb816>

Mayor's Action Plan

https://rva.gov/sites/default/files/2025-10/2025-MAP-Oct15_F.pdf

Fredericksburg, VA Towing Board info

<https://www.fredericksburgva.gov/255/Towing-Recovery-Board>

VA HB 959 (allowed localities to require photographs re: towing)

<https://legacylis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?241+ful+CHAP0537>