

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES

December 14, 2009

PRESENT: Ms. Helen McFadyen, Chair
Councillor Mary Wile
Councillor Jerry Blumenthal
Mr. Tom Boyd, Vice Chair
Ms. Joanne Coffey
Ms. Mary Newcombe
Ms. Theresa Horwill

REGRETS: Mr. Gary Russell

ABSENT: Ms. Johanne Caron

STAFF: Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant
Ms. Krista Tidgwell, Legislative Assistant

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m. in the Media Room, City Hall.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES - August 17, 2009, September 21, 2009 and November 14, 2009**

MOVED BY Ms. Joanne Coffey, seconded by Mr. Tom Boyd, that the minutes of August 17, 2009, as presented, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED BY Ms. Joanne Coffey, seconded by Mr. Tom Boyd, that the minutes of September 21, 2009, as presented, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED BY Mr. Tom Boyd, seconded by Ms. Theresa Horwill, that the minutes of November 16, 2009, as presented, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. **APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

Additions:

- 8.1 Helen McFadyen - Discussion with Committee regarding availability for January, February and March meetings
- 7.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee: Trails that lead to the Park West Elementary School (Verbal Update from Tom Boyd)

MOVED BY Councillor Jerry Blumenthal, seconded by Ms. Mary Newcombe, that the Order of Business, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. **BUSINESS ARISING/DEFERRED ITEMS**

4.1 **2009 Work Plan**

- 2009/2010 Committee of Council Annual Work Plan was before the Committee

Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, noted that the Committee regularly gets presentations from HRM staff on various issues. He indicated that this is not completely captured in the Work Plan. He suggested adding the following wording to the description so it would read: "To receive presentation from groups, HRM staff, or individuals in the community who have experience in any field...".

Council Mary Wile entered the meeting at 4:11 p.m.

In response to Mr. Rutt's comments, Ms. McFadyen indicated that the purpose of the description in the Work Plan is to solicit more from groups or individuals that are often not heard from. She noted that it is an opportunity for the Committee to be pro-active in inviting people to speak before the Committee and present their point of view. Ms.

McFadyen advised that she has found that the presentations are quite helpful in terms of knowing what is going on with certain demographics within HRM. It was noted that Ms. McFadyen has recently spoken with Lori Patterson, who would like to meet with the Committee. The Committee agreed to add "HRM staff" to the description in the Work Plan.

The Committee agreed to change the Work Plan date from 2009-2010 to 2010 to reflect the change in year.

MOVED BY Tom Boyd, seconded by Mary Newcombe, that the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities accept the Annual Work Plan for the year 2010, as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

In response to a concern raised by the Committee, Councillor Blumenthal advised that the Peninsula Community Council is interested in building larger recreational facilities. It was noted that Mr. Townsend will be providing an update at the next meeting regarding the Needham Centre and St. Andrew's Centre. Ms. McFadyen suggested having a representative from Recreation come in and speak to the Committee regarding recreation management. Councillor Blumenthal advised that the consultant's report has not been delivered to Recreation but should be by end of December or some time in January. He advised that Betty Lou Killen is the Coordinator of Client Services for Community Development.

Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, advised that every year the Canadian Paraplegic Association has a dinner in the spring where they present an award called the Victor Thibault Award for Barrier Free Design. He suggested nominating Mr. Townsend's department for the Capital Upgrade Program in barrier free design. Mr. Rutt advised that it would be inappropriate for a member of the HRM staff to nominate the Municipality, however, a member of the Committee could do so. Ms. Joanne Coffey advised that she would provide a copy of the forms and contact information, by way of email, to the Committee. Councillor Blumenthal requested a hard copy of the forms.

5. NEW BUSINESS - None

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

6.1 Correspondence - None

6.2 Petitions - None

6.3 Presentations

6.3.1 Webmaster, E-Commerce & Web Services, HRM - Kelly Marney, BrowseAloud

- A brief summary of the presentation was before the Committee.

Ms. Kelly Marney, webmaster for HRM, delivered a presentation to the Committee. She noted that HRM has speech-enabled its website using BrowseAloud, free software that will help those who find it difficult to read text online. The software is available to individuals

who have a plugin and individuals may have already experienced it when accessing HRM's website. The software icon can be found at the bottom of the webpage and looks like a bullseye. The software is targeted to groups such as: low literacy, people with learning disabilities, English as second language and other related groups. The software is not intended for individuals who are blind. The use of a mouse is still required and when hovering over a paragraph, the software will read the entire text out loud. BrowseAloud offer many options such as: changing the speed, reading the text out loud and showing the text in large font. There is also a text reader window and translator feature. The text can also be saved in MP3 format.

Ms. Joanne Coffey asked whether the software is able to transcribe bus route schedules. Ms. Marney advised that the software does experience potential problems when reading tables and noted that she is unsure whether maps can be transcribed. The software is able to read documents in Portable Document Format (PDF).

Ms. McFadyen indicated that it is important to identify for whom the software is tailored. She expressed a concern with people viewing the software as a free screen reader. Ms. Marney advised that a news release is being prepared by the marketing department. Staff want to market the software for newcomers to the HRM website and she welcomed suggestions from the Committee.

Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, advised that he has used the software and has found it challenging.

Ms. Marney advised that the software can stay open from webpage to webpage. It will close out if the person accesses a webpage that does not have BrowseAloud. It was noted that Google and Facebook offer BrowseAloud. Ms. Marney indicated that the software is compatible with screen readers.

It was noted that the cost for the software is approximately five to six thousand dollars (\$5,000 - \$6,000) for three years and covers all HRM websites. Ms. Marney noted that HRM has five extra licenses that they can offer to other community organizations. It was further noted that one license has been provided for the Canada Games website for the next two years but no decisions have been made in regard to the four remaining licenses.

Ms. Newcombe suggested HRM provide a license to the library and noted that it would be a good use for audio books. Ms. Marney advised that she would look into this option.

Ms. Marney advised that she has done several months of research herself and with other groups before purchasing the software. The software has been tested and is used in Europe. She noted that she has also spoken with a user in Ottawa, who spoke positively about the software.

Mr. Rutt advised that this software is a big improvement from other softwares that HRM has used in the past.

7. REPORTS

7.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee: Trails that lead to the Park West Elementary School (Verbal Update from Tom Boyd)

Mr. Tom Boyd provided the Committee with an update. He noted that the Active Transportation Advisory Committee meets the third Thursday of each month and noted that at last month's meeting a presentation was given regarding the Park West Elementary School and the trails that lead to School. The original development did not include a school being built on the land. Mr. Boyd noted that there are a few paths in the area that are not passable during the wintertime. He noted that trails need to be accessible to children going to school and individuals in wheelchairs.

Councillor Wile noted that they are small paths throughout the woods but these are not considered trails. It would be extremely costly for HRM to maintain and winterize every pathway. She noted that there are sidewalks in the area. The estimated cost to maintain the pathway is around ninety-one thousand dollar (\$91,000). An area rate was proposed by the Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) Steering Committee, to determine whether the community wished to fix up the pathway; however, the area rate vote was turned down by the residents of the area. The pathway is currently accessible around nine months of the year.

Ms. McFadyen noted that when Mr. Paul Euloth, Regional Trail Coordinator, Real Property Planning, had met with the Committee, he had advised them that there would be at least one fully accessible trail in HRM by spring. She noted that her understanding was that the trail the Committee was aiming for is the one located at Alderney in Dartmouth.

Mr. Rutt noted that there are a number of accessible trails but not necessarily in the downtown of HRM. Ms. McFadyen noted that as part of the criteria the trail should be accessible by bus. Mr. Rutt confirmed that the transit buses has to have a landing pad if it is a low floor bus and most times the locations are found through the use of Global Positioning System (GPS). He noted that most trails have a civic address and the key would be to find out what that address is because often there are no signs posted. It was suggested that if signs were posted near the trails it would assist the bus driver in locating them. Mr. Rutt also noted that a landing pad is not necessary for an access-a-bus.

During the ensuing discussion, the Committee agreed to set up a meeting with Mr. Euloth at their January meeting to provide insight into HRM's trails.

The Chair expressed concern and asked whether the GPS is working on buses in regard to the Metro Transit Go Time. Councillor Wile advised that she would pass this concern along and see if she could get an answer. Councillor Wile also expressed concern in regard to visually impaired people not being able to access the Go Time.

During the ensuing discussion, Mr. Boyd indicated that the Hamilton Rail was asked to put in an audible announcement and be visually displayed in all buses to indicate stops, which

he noted are in to date. It was further noted that most of Ontario currently has automated systems.

Councillor Wile exited the meeting at 5:18 p.m.

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Helen McFadyen - Discussion with Committee regarding availability for January, February and March meetings

Ms. Helen McFadyen advised that she would not be able to Chair the meetings for January, February and March due to another commitment. She expressed concern with previous meetings not having a quorum and suggested that if the Committee has the same concerns, they could look at an alternative meeting day, aside from Monday evening, for those three (3) meetings.

The Committee was informed that a recommendation will be going forward from the Membership Selection Committee to Council regarding appointments to Committees of Council. An advertisement will be placed in the new year to recruit for vacancies and at present, there has been no applications submitted.

The Committee suggested the Clerk look into alternative dates for January's meeting. It was also noted that Tom Boyd could Chair the meeting as Vice Chair, therefore, if most Committee members are able to attend the January 18, 2010 meeting, then there would be no need to reschedule.

The Committee expressed concern in regard to applicants being rejected and asked if Councillor Blumenthal, who sits on the Membership Selection Committee, could provide a list of criteria for being accepted onto the Committee.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE - January 18, 2010

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

Krista Tidgwell
Legislative Assistant

Information Items

None.