

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES August 16, 2010

PRESENT: Mr. Tom Boyd, Chair
Ms. Theresa Horwill, Vice Chair
Councillor Mary Wile
Councillor Jerry Blumenthal
Ms. Mary Newcombe
Mr. Troy Nauffts
Ms. Helen McFadyen
Mr. Brian Aird
Mr. Jack Jones

REGRETS: Mr. Gary Russell

STAFF: Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant
Mr. Phil Townsend, Director, Infrastructure and Asset
Management
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, HRP
Ms. Krista Tidgwell, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

The Chair announced that the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities is invited to attend a consultation meeting on August 24th for the new HRM Central Library. The meeting will be held at the Spring Garden Road Library from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. and will focus on the needs of persons with disabilities. It was noted that Mr. Boyd, Ms. McFadyen and Mr. Aird would attend the August 24th consultation meeting.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - June 21, 2010

MOVED by Councillor Mary Wile, seconded by Mr. Brian Aird, that the minutes of June 21, 2010 be approved, as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS - ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Additions:

8.1 Update - Amendments to Taxi By-law related to Persons with Disabilities

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

4. BUSINESS ARISING/DEFERRED ITEMS

4.1 Metro Transit's Accessibility

(i) May 17, 2010 ACPD Minute Extract

A Minute Extract of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities May 17, 2010 session was before the Committee.

Ms. McFadyen advised that since the Committee's May 17th meeting she has drafted an alternative recommendation for the Committee's consideration; however, through discussions with the Chair and Legislative Assistant, she is required to give Notice of Rescission of the May 17, 2010 motion in order to make a new recommendation.

The Legislative Assistance reviewed the process with the Committee noting that a motion has to be made to suspend the Rules of Order in order to address the Motion of Rescission today; otherwise, it would be discussed at the next meeting. If the Committee agrees to suspend the Rules of Order and the Motion of Rescission is approved, then the May 17th motion would no longer exist and a new recommendation could be put forward for consideration.

Ms. McFadyen commented that the May 17th motion does not reflect a key element to improving Metro Transit's accessibility which is the installation/implementation of an automated and visual bus stop announcement system on Metro Transit's buses. She commented that this system would benefit and provide assistance to persons who are visually impaired, as well as, the general public (ie. tourists, students, persons with learning disabilities, etc.). Ms. McFadyen indicated that she has documentation which identifies other cities that have implemented forms of audio and visual announcement systems for transit.

Councillor Wile suggested an alternative, whereby the Committee could make a recommendation in addition to the May 17th motion; instead of retracting the original motion altogether.

Following a brief Committee discussion the Committee agreed that a Notice of Rescission was not required and it was **MOVED by Councillor Mary Wile, seconded by Ms. Helen McFadyen, recommend that Halifax Regional Council give consideration to the implementation of an automated audio and visual bus stop announcement system as a first step to improving all accessibility on HRM Metro Transit routes.**

During further discussion, the Committee noted the following points and concerns respecting Metro Transit's announcement systems:

- concern with a lack of funding for transit upgrades
- option of launching a human rights complaint regarding Metro Transit accessibility, specifically the absence of bus stop announcements on transit routes
- Metro Transit's *Go Time* system is not operating properly and should be reviewed
- bus drivers should consistently be announcing all major stops; Metro Transit has indicated that drivers are unable to announce stops due to safety concerns

Several Committee members expressed concern with the lack of consistency and time duration with the Halifax and Dartmouth ferry terminals' audible signals. The Committee is concerned that a visually impaired person could miss the announcement due to the short time frame.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Legislative Assistant advised that a draft version of the Committee's report to Regional Council will be provided to the Committee for review prior to going to Council.

4.2 2010 Work Plan

A copy of the 2010 Committee of Council Annual Work Plan was before the Committee.

During the Committee's review of the 2010 Committee of Council Annual Work Plan, the Committee entered into a discussion regarding the Canada Games Centre and the following points and suggestions were noted:

- there will be a reception desk near the main doors of the Centre to assist with citizen's inquiries
- the Universal Access Committee is working with the Canada Games Centre staff regarding the development of the Center
- once HRM takes possession of the Centre, training will commence respecting procedural/customer service training (ie. orientation to the building and where a service dog will safely remain on the pool deck while their handler is swimming)
- an elevator is being installed in the Centre
- there will be a walkway leading directly to the entrance of the Centre
- the bus stop cannot be extended up to the front door of the Centre due to a one lane bridge; possibility of having the bridge converted into a two lane bridge
- opportunity for Committee members to tour the Centre and review its setup and structure

Phil Townsend, Manager, Capital Project, Infrastructure and Asset Management provided an update to the Committee. Highlights were as follows:

- the Committee had previously recommended that \$50,000 go towards the installation of a wheelchair ramp to the viewing platform at the Spryfield Lions Arena; staff has determined that the accessibility project is more extensive than first anticipated (ie. a need for accessible washrooms); no additional funding from the Committee is being requested; the project is estimated to be \$160,000 and will include two new fully accessible washrooms, modifications to the canteen, wheelchair ramp and viewing area (large enough to accommodate two wheelchairs), as well as, to the parking lot; the project is estimated to be completed by late September 2010
- staff are reviewing prices for the installation of door operators for the lower parking lot of Alderney Landing
- the installation of a wheelchair ramp and hand rail is underway at the Centennial Pool
- new steps and railing are being installed at the Creighton Community Centre; accessibility upgrades to the parking lot had to be cancelled and he will provide a further update at the next meeting
- the washroom doors at Point Pleasant Park have been installed
- action has not been taken regarding the installation of an elevator at the St. Andrew's Centre; this matter is under review by Recreation staff
- the Chocolate Lake Recreation Centre's lower level ladies washroom accessibility work has been completed

- the St. Margaret's Community Centre walkway and wheelchair ramp has been installed
- the Committee has a budget of \$150,000 for 2010-2011 plus the addition of uncommitted funds from previous years (approximately \$80,000 from 2008-2009 and \$130,000 from 2009-2010)
- accessibility upgrades for the Needham Centre is on hold pending staff's review; staff require direction regarding the long term use of the facility

Mr. Townsend advised that the Committee can direct staff to provide a list of recommendations for their consideration regarding facilities that would benefit from accessibility upgrades.

Ms. Horwill commented that focus should be put on the outstanding projects rather than commencing with new ones.

In response to a suggestion made by Mr. Rutt regarding upgrades to the Sackville Community Arena, Mr. Townsend advised that he would confirm whether the facility is owned by HRM or the Lake District Recreation Association.

In response to a request for a status update of Bloomfield Centre by Ms. McFadyen, Councillor Blumenthal indicated that staff has put out a Request for Proposal. Dalhousie University – Architectural is painting the Centre to brighten it up. Ms. McFadyen suggested the construction of a pathway leading to the Centre, rather than having residents travel through the parking lot.

Mr. Townsend indicated that HRM's current plan for the Bloomfield Centre is to demolish the building that is fronted by Robie Street, Almon Street and Agricola Street and construct a new building. There are two other buildings one on Agricola and one on Robie Street that HRM plans to retain. It is not a wise investment to put money towards repairing a building that HRM plans to demolish.

In response to the ferry terminal's audible signals concern expressed earlier by Committee members, Mr. Townsend advised that he would follow up on this matter.

The Chair encouraged the Committee members and others to provide their input regarding opportunities where the budget could be spent towards improving accessibility to HRM facilities and properties (ie. parks).

4.3 Discussion re: Dartmouth Bridge Terminal (*deferred from June 21, 2010*)

Mr. Townsend provided an update to the Committee regarding the new Dartmouth Bridge Terminal accessibility concerns expressed by Committee members during previous meetings. Highlights were as follows:

- it is staff's practice to make all of HRM's buildings fully accessible; there are building code requirements which staff strives to exceed by using universal design principles
- the building will be constructed so that when the announcement function is available, HRM staff will be able to install it; the conduits to run the wires will all be installed
- there is presently no system in place that will allow the automatic announcement of bus arrivals and departures; once a system becomes available the facility will be able to accommodate it
- it is HRM's policy that accessibility is an overarching principle; when HRM designs its facilities, the facilities are designed as best as they can be to incorporate accessibility features

Mr. Townsend suggested the Committee invite Dave Raege and Stephen Outerbridge back to a Committee meeting for further discussion regarding the Committee's concerns for the new terminal. He commented that the Committee's concerns/suggestions regarding the incorporation of textile features is not an expensive issue, but a matter of selecting the correct materials to be installed. He further indicated that all of the Committee's concerns may not be able to be addressed because designing for accessibility can be challenging in that one person's needs could cross purposes with another. (ie. a good height for a particular disability may be a poor height for another.) Mr. Townsend has indicated to staff that HRM needs to be using all of the tools available to make the terminal accessible.

Ms. McFadyen suggested that consultation with a Committee, staff, etc. should be done throughout the entire process of a major development.

In response to a question raised by Mr. Aird, Mr. Townsend noted that the terminal will have 16 bus bays with approximately two to three buses arriving and departing at any given time. Most of the buses will have designated bays; however, the Committee is concerned with respect to how a visually impaired person will identify where their bus is located and when it arrives and departs. The system used to identify arrivals and departures is an automated system because it is too confusing for a staff member to verbally announce each bus. The mechanism to implement the automated system would be linked to the new announcement system that ties into the Global Position System (GPS) of the bus. However, the GPS system is not fully operational at present and therefore, it is not an issue with the building but rather having the technology in place to implement this process.

Mr. Laughlin Rutt exited the meeting at 5:25 p.m.

The Committee agreed to invite Dave Raege and Stephen Outerbridge back for further discussion and requested that staff provide a model of the new facility.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Discussion re: Roundabout Safety for Persons with Disabilities

The Committee entered into a discussion regarding roundabout in HRM and the safety for persons with disabilities and other pedestrians.

Mr. Phillip Townsend exited the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

During the discussion the following points, concerns and suggestions were noted:

- roundabouts should be installed in areas with a low percentage of pedestrians (ie. rural areas where there is a large percentage of traffic and minimal pedestrians)
- England has installed traffic lights in their smaller roundabouts to allow pedestrians to cross safely
- there is concern regarding the safety of roundabouts for visually impaired persons, bicyclists and seniors

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS - NONE

7. REPORTS - NONE

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Update - Amendments to Taxi By-law related to Persons with Disabilities

The Legislative Assistant advised that Amanda Jenkins, the sister of Holly Bartlett, a visually impaired woman who suffered a fatal accident when she became disoriented after being dropped off by a taxi, made a presentation to the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee during their August 12, 2010 meeting. The Committee passed a motion for Regional Council's consideration to investigate appropriate wording in By-law T-108 to address the concerns regarding reasonable steps being taken to ensure that persons with disabilities arrive safely at their destination.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE - September 20, 2010

10. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public came forward at this time.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Krista Tidgwell
Legislative Assistant

INFORMATION ITEMS August 16, 2010

1. Correspondence from Richard C. Gauthier, President & CEO, Canadian Automobile Dealers Association dated June 18, 2010 re: lack of sound emission from hybrid vehicles.
2. Correspondence from Donald E. Moore, Executive Director, Canadian Transportation Equipment Association dated June 21, 2010 re: lack of sound emission from hybrid vehicles.
3. Correspondence from Steve Rodgers, President, Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association dated June 22, 2010 re: lack of sound emission from hybrid vehicles.
4. Extract from the Community Halifax Herald - August 9, 2010 Edition entitled: Make effort to keep sidewalks clear for disabled.