

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
Minutes**

November 16, 2009

PRESENT: Ms. Helen McFadyen, Chair
Mr. Tom Boyd, Vice Chair
Mr. Gary Russell
Councillor Mary Wile
Ms. Theresa Horwill

REGRETS: Councillor Jerry Blumenthal
Ms. Joanne Coffey
Ms. Mary Newcombe

ABSENT: Ms. Johanne Caron

STAFF: Mr. Laughlin Rutt, HRM Diversity Consultant
Mr. Phil Townsend, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management
Mr. David Lane, Senior Planner, Planning Services
Ms. Krista Tidgwell, Legislative Assistant

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. in the Media Room, City Hall, without a quorum present.

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

The Chair advised the Committee did not have quorum and therefore the minutes could not be approved.

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

The Chair advised that item 6.3.1 - Proposed Amendments to the Temporary Sign Bylaw (S-800) would be dealt with as the first order of business.

4. **BUSINESS ARISING/DEFERRED ITEMS**

4.1 **2009 Work Plan**

This item was addressed following Item 6.3.1 - Proposed Amendments to the Temporary Sign Bylaw (S-800). See Page 5.

5. **NEW BUSINESS - NONE**

6. **CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS**

6.1 **Correspondence - None**

6.2 **Petitions - None**

6.3 **Presentations**

6.3.1 **Proposed Amendments to the Temporary Sign Bylaw (S-800) - David Lane, Senior Planner**

- A document entitled, Temporary Sign Bylaw (S-800) Amendments Proposed Changes Summary, dated October 29, 2009 was before the Committee.
- A power point presentation was submitted to the Committee.
- The following information was circulated to the Committee:
 - A table titled Temporary Signs that Require a License; and
 - A Schedule A of the Service and Zone Standards.

Mr. David Lane, Senior Planner, introduced Mr. Ken Reashor, Manager, Traffic & Right of Way Services/Traffic Authority and Mr. Trevor Creaser, Development Officer to the Committee and provided an overview of the proposed amendments to the temporary Sign Bylaw (S-800). He advised the purpose was to engage in general discussion and receive feedback from the Committee on the amendments.

Due to lack of quorum, the Committee commenced with discussion only. The following questions, concerns and suggestions were raised:

- A need for stricter bylaw enforcement - if the law can not be enforced, then what is its purpose? What can be done to create more enforcement?
- An option could be to hire students to do bylaw enforcement.
- Sidewalk repair signs indicating pedestrians are to move to the other side of the street can be harmful for those that are visually impaired.
- Restaurant tables set up in the summer months decrease the width of the sidewalk. Some do not meet the 7 foot requirement.
- Sidewalk sales create barriers. Are store owners required to have a license? How long are licenses good for?
- Should be reporting individuals that do not have a license for their signs.
- Road signs are being placed on the corners of sidewalks and on ramps and should be removed.
- Is there any type of control over construction zones putting up fences on sidewalks?
- There should be larger fines for individuals that block sidewalk access to pedestrians and persons with disabilities. Blocking the sidewalk creates limits for persons with disabilities in relation to their independence and mobility.
- Is there a faster way to have the signs that are blocking the sidewalks removed other than filing a complaint?
- Signs are not always in front of the facility that is advertising.
- Signs next to crowded bus stops limit the access for persons with disabilities even more.
- Certain buildings in Halifax have steps that decrease the 7 foot sidewalk minimum.
- Real estate signs are often placed beside curb cuts and at corners of sidewalks.
- Lotto signs often tip over in the wind, creating a hazard.
- How will a visually impaired person obtain bus stop closure information, if only a sign is posted at that particular bus stop?
- Mailboxes are often beside crosswalks and small children might not be seen by motorists.
- Some sandwich boards exceed the 4 feet height limit.
- Expiration stickers should be placed on the permits so people know how long the sign will be there.
- Multiple signs in one location.
- Decrease the amount of mobile signs.

In response to concerns raised by the Committee, Mr. Creaser advised that bylaw enforcement of public safety issues is a priority. He noted that staff are working on addressing this issue. He advised that none of the sandwich boards are currently licensed, however, if the city were to receive complaints in this regard, this could be changed.

Councillor Wile advised that the table provided to the Committee showed that the sandwich boards are required to be licensed. Trevor Creaser, Development Officer, confirmed that there is a fee to license the sandwich boards, however Regional Council

has asked staff to step back from the licencing requirements.

David Lane asked the Committee that if the existing requirement of 7 feet (2.1 metres) clear on all sidewalks was deemed adequate space for the mobility challenged. Staff noted that 7 feet is standard and served the purpose to have two wheelchairs pass each other on the sidewalk. It was also noted that permits were not supposed to be issued to an individual or business if it impedes with the 7 feet. Mr. Lane advised that real estate signs in the right of way are not presently permitted nor are they proposed in the Bylaw amendments. Real estate signs on private property are regulated in the respective Land Use By-laws.

Staff advised they would look into a temporary steel sign that was put up for construction at the corner of Cogswell Street and Brunswick Street in Halifax. Mr. Ken Reashor, Manager/Traffic Authority, Traffic & Right of Way, advised that the permits had been issued to Heritage Gas.

Mr. Lane advised that the a common separation distance for mobile signs and planter boxes is being proposed at 125 feet in comparison to the current separation distances of 100 and 150 feet respectively.

4.1 2009 Work Plan

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

Phil Townsend, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management, provided an update to the Committee on the current upgrade projects around HRM:

- Upgrades have been completed at City Hall, 2nd floor men's and women's washrooms, to make them more accessible.
- Washroom upgrades have been done for persons with disabilities at the Samuel R. Balcolm Community Centre.
- The Bowls Arena and Beachville Lakeside Recreation Centre have new parking areas for persons with disabilities.
- A Noland Lift has been installed at the Bedford Lions Pool.
- The Grand Desert Community Centre and West Chezzetcook Community Centre both have new front doors with operators on them.
- The Capital William Spry Community Centre has a new dedicated parking area.
- Work is underway on installing audio signals in all ferry terminals.
- The Creighton Avenue Community Centre has a new parking lot.
- The Halifax Ferry Terminal's front doors have been upgraded to make them more accessible.
- Upgrades to the doors have been completed at the East Preston Recreational Centre.
- Upgrades have not started at the Point Pleasant Park's washrooms but is still on the list.
- Construction is underway at the Spryfield Lions Club's washrooms and viewing platform.
- Accessibility upgrades have been completed at the Centennial Pool.

- Various upgrades, including accessibility, have been completed at the Chocolate Lake Recreation Centre.
- The work on the service dog park has been completed.
- Accessibility upgrades have been completed to the George Dickson Centre.

Mr. Townsend noted that not all of the projects are being funded from the Disabilities Committee accounts but he wanted to provide the Committee with a sense that HRM is out there on a number of fronts.

Mr. Townsend advised that there was one new request and it was from the Eastern Shore Community Centre located in Musquodoboit Harbour. They are looking for upgrades to their elevators. He noted that the Manager, Dale Steinberg has put it on his list of things he would like to do and Mr. Steinberg has advised that they are having difficulties with seniors and people with mobility problems getting up the stairs. Mr. Townsend advised that when there are events at the Community Centre people are often carried up and down the stairs. Mr. Steinberg has expressed concern that the Centre is not meeting the needs of the community as well as potential liability issues related to carrying people up and down the stairs. Mr. Townsend advised that he does not have substantial background information on this matter at this current time. He advised that many of HRM's buildings could also use elevators.

The Committee requested staff get an estimate on the cost of putting elevators in at the Eastern Shore Community Centre. Mr. Townsend advised that he believes the estimate would be around \$50,000 but noted that he would bring the information to next months meeting. The Chair requested quotes on the cost for chairlifts as well.

In response to concern raised by the Committee regarding the Alderney Gate parking lot, Mr. Townsend advised that he had no update on this matter but would look into it and report back to the Committee. Mr. Townsend also advised he would provide an update at next month's meeting regarding the status of the Point Pleasant Park washrooms.

Mr. Townsend advised that the Committee still had approximately \$140,000 to \$150,000 in the account.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Wile in regard to the process of getting funding for projects, Mr. Townsend advised that, typically, requests are submitted around the capital budget; residents may identify problem areas that staff see as having an accessibility component to them and this areas do not always get funded through the Disabilities Committee but are often part of a larger project. He noted that staff are not actively out looking for the projects.

The Committee raised the following concerns regarding the Argyle Street door at City Hall:

- Difficult for individuals in wheelchairs to get into and out of the building through that entrance.
- The carpet in front of the door keeps lifting up; it was suggested that putting

- down velcro may be a possibility to fix the problem.
- The doorbell should be lowered or have an adequate sign installed.

Mr. Laughlin Rutt, HRM Diversity Consultant, advised that this matter had gone out to tender and noted that the front doors of City Hall had been replaced. Mr. Townsend advised that he would look into getting a ramp installed and having the carpet fastened down. Mr. Townsend also confirmed that he would set up a meeting with a project manager to meet with Mr. Rutt to determine a solution in regard to installing a door bell or sign.

The Chair expressed concern with a complaint she had filed with the call centre regarding Metro Transit. She was given an apology but no follow up call was provided within 48 hours, which is the standard procedure. She noted the issue was very serious.

Mr. Townsend asked the Chair to provide him the incident number and he would have someone from transit contact her. He noted that the call centre is not allowed to sign off on the matter until the incident has been addressed. Mr. Townsend advised the next option would be to contact Metro Transit managers and keep moving up the chain until her matter has been addressed.

Mr. Gary Russell expressed concern that the Metro Transit Access A Bus website had not been updated since June. He advised that HRM's information services has the information but wondered what the delay was. Mr. Townsend advised he would look into this matter.

In response to a question raised by the Chair, Mr. Townsend advised that Peter Verge, Manager of Operations, could assist her with getting the grass cut at the service dog park before winter. Councillor Wile advised that she has Mr. Verge's contact information should Ms. McFadyen wish to contact him.

Phil Townsend exited the meeting at 5:02 p.m.

Mr. Laughlin Rutt exited the meeting at 5:07 p.m.

In response to concern raised by the Committee regarding accessible taxis, Councillor Wile provided an update to the Committee advising that the front and back of the taxi doors would be 51 inches wide. She noted that the width of the doors and trunk space should accommodate a wheelchair but was not sure if this was the standard for all taxis.

Other concerns raised by the Committee were as follows:

- Some taxi drivers refusing persons with disabilities.
- Not enough truck space to fit a wheelchair if there is a spare tire already in the trunk.
- Not enough space if there is more than one travelling companion. Also limited to the amount of baggage that can fit into the taxi along with the wheelchair.

The Chair advised the Committee would review this matter at the December meeting.

7. **REPORTS - NONE**

8. **ADDED ITEMS**

9. **NEXT MEETING DATE - December 21, 2009**

The Committee agreed to reschedule the December 21, 2009 meeting to December 14, 2009.

The Committee requested the Clerk to check on the status of the two vacancies and look at getting those spots filled.

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

Krista Tidgwell
Legislative Assistant