

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN HRM
MINUTES

February 20, 2012

PRESENT: Theresa Horwill, Chair
Tom Boyd, Vice Chair
Troy Nauffts
Brian Aird
Cynthia Bryant
Councillor Mary Wile
Councillor Jerry Blumenthal

REGRETS: Mary Newcombe

ABSENT: David MacLean

STAFF: Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, Human Resources
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Darren Young, Project Manager, Infrastructure & Asset
Management
Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in Duke 1 meeting room, 3rd floor, Duke Tower, 5251 Duke Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 16, 2012

MOVED by Councillor Wile, seconded by Brian Aird, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee minutes of January 16, 2012 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

The Committee agreed to move the presentation under Item 6.3.1 to the first order of business.

Councillor Blumenthal gave regrets for the March 19th meeting.

MOVED by Tom Boyd, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

6.3.1 Disability Rights Coalition – Forum on Accessibility

Information on the Disability Rights Coalition and a copy of the presentation was distributed to the Committee and are on file.

Ms. Jean Coleman, Executive Director, Nova Scotia Association for Community Living, and Ms. Lisa Pottie, Executive Director, Muscular Dystrophy Canada, addressed the Committee on behalf of the Disability Rights Coalition.

Ms. Coleman advised that the Disability Rights Coalition is an advocacy group made up of people who have disabilities, professionals who work with people who have disabilities, and friends and family members. The Disability Rights Coalition has over thirty member organizations. She reviewed the history of the Coalition.

Ms. Coleman indicated that the Coalition is hoping to interest the Accessibility Advisory Committee in holding a “town hall” style meeting where people can bring forward accessibility issues, such as physical barriers (sidewalks cuts), signage, issues with computer navigation, etc.

Ms. Pottie advised that St. John, New Brunswick recently held a town hall meeting on accessibility issues. Ms. Pottie suggested that the town hall meeting should be an HRM initiative, and should involve key staff people that are able to initiate the changes identified as needed.

Ms. Coleman and Ms. Pottie reviewed the key features, suggested format, and practical details of the meeting, noting the following:

- Bloomfield Centre would be a central and accessible location;
- Light refreshments could be served
- The meeting could be held in the early evening for about 1.5 hours;
- The meeting could be held during Disability Awareness Week (first week of May);
- The meeting could involve a forum panel of representatives from the Committee, HRM staff, and other groups, with a question and answer session and an opportunity for feedback from attendees;
- Invitations could be sent out by email using the contacts of the Committee as well as to member organizations of the Disability Rights Coalition;
- One months notice should be given for travel arrangements.

Ms. Pottie added that this would be an opportunity for HRM to generate good will in the sense that HRM is looking for ways to hear and engage members of the disability communities around their concerns.

The Committee discussed potential dates to hold such an event, noting the following:

- June may be a better time, in case the transit strike is still in effect;
- Holding the event during HRM Bike Week may be another alternative (last week of May);
- International Day of the Disabled in December could be another option.

The Committee discussed aspects of the meeting, including the following:

- There would be costs associated with having interpreters or a loop system;
- The meeting would be an HRM initiative and therefore open to the HRM community;
- A concern with the Bloomfield Centre is the lack of parking;
- The Halifax Forum multi-purpose centre is a fully accessible facility with plenty of parking, although this space may be too large for 20 or 30 attendees;
- Other venues could include the Canada Games Centre, the BMO Centre, or the new Soccer Nova Scotia facility;
- Comments and questions could be emailed beforehand to ensure that the answers will be on hand;
- The meeting could be broadcast on the internet;
- Facebook is a good forum for invitations;
- The types of issues that would be discussed could be clearly communicated before the meeting, to avoid confusion with the jurisdictions of the different levels of government;
- Corporate communications could be used to promote the event;

- This may be a good opportunity to promote the Committee, and to also network and get to know other community groups and organizations promoting accessibility issues.

MOVED by Troy Nauffts, seconded by Councillor Wile, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee agree to hold a town hall meeting on accessibility at the Bloomfield Centre in the near future, subject to the availability of public transportation. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Educational Awareness

4.1.1 Development of list of focus issues for Corporate Communications

The Chair clarified that this is further to the discussion the Committee held with Shaune McKinlay from HRM Corporate Communications last November. Ms. McKinlay suggested that the Committee put together a list of accessibility issues of concern that they would like to promote through public educational awareness, and she would then meet with the Committee to discuss options for the promotion of these issues.

Tom Boyd advised that he has compiled a list of issues for the Committee to consider, as follows:

1. Residents' responsibility to trim low hanging branches and bushes around sidewalks
2. Obstruction of sidewalks with garbage cans and green bins
3. Locked bicycles impeding pedestrians
4. In winter, salting and shoveling of sidewalks
5. In winter, shoveling sidewalk cuts at corners for wheelchair users to cross the street
6. Communication of safety rules re: wheelchair/motorized scooter users and crosswalks
7. Obstruction of sidewalks by vehicles parking or partially parking on sidewalks
8. Obstruction of sidewalks with sandwich board signs
9. Idling cars and buses affecting people with breathing difficulties
10. Obstruction/interruption of sidewalks by patio cafés/bars

The Committee discussed the issues identified. The Legislative Assistant will send the list to the Committee for any further ideas, and then send the list to Ms. McKinlay and ask her to attend the next meeting to discuss options with the Committee.

4.2 Disability Training (continuation) – *Laughlin Rutt, Human Resources*

Mr. Rutt and the Committee agreed to defer the continuation of the Disability Training to the March meeting due to the full agenda.

4.3 Bus Stop Annunciation report to Transportation Standing Committee - update

The Legislative Assistant updated that the report on this topic from the Committee was presented to the Transportation Standing Committee (TSC) at their January 2012 meeting. The TSC approved a motion at that meeting requesting a staff report on moving forward with, and having a timeline set for, visual and audio announce system installment for Metro Transit buses and ferries.

The Legislative Assistant is expecting this report for the March 22, 2012 TSC meeting, and will update the Committee as to the outcome.

4.4 Needham Centre

The Chair advised that several members of the Committee were able to go on guided a tour of the Needham Centre with Betty Lou Killen, HRM Community & Recreational Services, Darren Young, Infrastructure & Asset Management, and Shelley Haynes from the Needham Centre. They looked at opportunities to improve the accessibility of the centre, noting the following options to make the first floor accessible:

- Installing door openers on the front doors;
- Moving wheelchair parking to the lower lot;
- Installing a lift in the pool;
- Changes to the locker rooms;
- Installation of a shower head at the pool level.

Councillor Blumenthal offered funding from his district capital funds for first floor accessibility improvements to the Needham Centre. Items such as door openers can be funded through the Infrastructure and Asset Management accessibility budget.

Darren Young will bring back estimates for to the next meeting.

Councillor Wile retired from the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Committee Emails

The Committee briefly discussed issues with the use of group emails, and how to better communicate with one another.

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

6.1 Correspondence - None

6.2 Petitions - None

6.3 Presentation

6.3.1 Disability Rights Coalition – Forum on Accessibility

This item was addressed earlier in the meeting. Refer to page 3.

7. REPORTS

7.1 Update on accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings

7.1.1 Staff Update

Darren Young updated the Committee on accessibility improvements to the Dartmouth Ferry Terminal, noting that a door operator was added to the accessible washroom and the Commissionaire now has a remote to open the door.

He noted that he has been working with elections staff to identify locations for polling stations (there were 165 different locations for the last election) and ensuring the accessibility of these locations.

Darren commented that there were 24 doors identified at Cole Harbour place that needed to be made accessible. The cost would be approx. \$80,000, which is not possible all at once. He is working with Cole Harbour Place staff to identify four doors at a time to be made accessible, based on the heaviest usage. He clarified that some doors have already been done at the facility and they were all tested.

North Woodside Community Centre is now accessible, Supt. Falkenham visited the facility last week.

At the request of the Committee, Darren will follow up on the new chips for the ferry terminal.

At the request of the Committee, Darren confirmed that the Sackville Sports Stadium is on the priority list, he just hasn't made it that far on the list yet. He hopes to get to that facility within the next month or so. He will also be looking at the Sackville Public Library.

7.1.2 Committee Member Update

Committee members noted that the bars were not installed in the accessible washrooms on the west side of the Forum (near the canteen). Mr. Young indicated he has already flagged this issue and will have it rectified.

The Committee discussed the recent Central Library consultation meetings. The Chair noted that there is an upcoming meeting on March 6th from 9:30 to noon, and that they have been asked to select 3 members to attend. Those that offered to attend were: Theresa Horwill, Tom Boyd, and Supt. Falkenham. Troy Nauffts and Cindy Bryant offered to attend if the buses are running by that date.

Mr. Boyd advised that the Central Library board is well represented by way of those with visual and hearing difficulties and mobility issues (wheelchair users). He noted that there is an outstanding issue of how the accessibility buses will drop people off. The building will only be 8 feet from the curb which is not enough room to put in a driveway loop for this purpose. Mr. Boyd noted that there is currently a regular bus stop in front on Spring Garden Road, although this will have to be moved to in front of the neighbouring DalTech building. There are concerns with an Access-A-Bus using the same bus stop because of the time that it takes for an Access-A-Bus to load and unload passengers. The doors on Morris Street are designated as fire doors which are exit only. The only other possibility would be the parking area between Dal Tech and the library, which would require the permission of DalTech.

The Committee suggested that the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee also be consulted about this issue. Mr. Young indicated that it would be helpful to have a site plan, and know an average pick up/drop off time for the Access-A-Bus.

8. ADDED ITEMS - None

9. NEXT MEETING DATE – March 19, 2012

The Committee discussed the possibility of moving the March meeting to a library location with a loop hearing system. The Legislative Assistant will look into this and advise the Committee.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Jennifer Weagle
Legislative Assistant