

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

October 22, 2012

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

STAFF: Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, Human Resources  
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police  
Darren Young, Project Manager, Infrastructure & Asset  
Management  
Phil Herritt, Metro Transit  
Damion Stapledon, Community & Recreation Services  
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support

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## 1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor of Duke Tower, 5251 Duke Street, Halifax.

## 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 10, 2012

**MOVED by Councillor Wile, seconded by Ms. Mary Newcombe, that the minutes of September 10, 2012 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

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

Additions:

- 8.1 2012 HRM Volunteer Conference
- 8.2 HRM Election
- 8.3 Taxi Accessibility re: Service Animals
- 8.4 Accessible Playgrounds

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

## 4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

### 4.1 Metro Transit Policy on Service Animals

A sub-committee consisting of the Chair, Vice Chair and Mr. Laughlin Rutt met with Mr. Patrick Meagher to discuss the Metro Transit Policy on Service Animals. Mr. Phil Herritt, who attended the Accessibility Committee meeting on behalf of Mr. Pat Meagher, was looking for the Committee's feedback on the wording that Metro Transit is considering using in their Policy on Service Animals.

Mr. Herritt did not have the policy that the Committee had previously discussed. There were questions from Committee members about why the portion surrounding certification had been removed from the policy and it was explained that the cost of attaining certifications had been taken into account. He also stated that there are many different types of service animals that provide many different types of assistance, some of which are not as obvious as others when it comes to certification. Metro Transit has been investigating what other jurisdictions are doing in an attempt to develop the best possible policy for HRM.

The Chair and Ms. Newcombe raised issues around the possibility of other passengers being allergic to animal hair. Mr. Herritt believed this was covered under the statement "Animal under the control of its owner". The Committee agreed with Mr. Herritt's

definition better than the definition previously discussed at the September meeting because it is broader and more comprehensive.

At the request of Councillor Wile, Mr. Herritt confirmed that the wording he is now working from includes service animals who are assisting individuals with epilepsy, not just visual or hearing impairment.

Councillor Blumenthal asked how long it would take for this definition to go to Council to be passed. Mr. Herritt said that he was intending to bring the broader policy back to the Accessibility Committee at their next meeting for their review and that it would then go on to Council for approval.

Ms. Pottie emphasized that the certification piece needs to be clarified because that will be the basis of most individuals' concerns. Mr. Herritt noted that this is where other jurisdictions are a very useful tool for HRM. He mentioned that the New York subway system has a great and promising model. In New York individuals who require the use of a service animal simply needs their doctor to deem a service animal medically necessary and with that information the public transportation authority provides the individual with an identification card allowing the individual to travel on their public transit system with their animal.

Mr. Nauffts requested that a copy of the policy be sent to all Committee members in advance of the next meeting so that the Committee can come prepared and with questions. Mr. Herritt said that he would send the policy in its current state to Committee members for comment shortly and a more finalized version closer to the next meeting.

Mr. Boyd asked whether or not the policy would be going through their legal division and Mr. Herritt explained that going through communications and legal is always part of the process.

Mr. Aird suggested Metro Transit consult with a focus group of individuals with service animals. Mr. Herritt said that they are using best practices and cross-jurisdictional analysis in their approach instead.

#### **4.2 Disability Training – *Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant***

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

### **5. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **5.1 The Play Book – A Guide to Sport & Recreation Opportunities for People with Disabilities – *Damion Stapledon, Community & Recreation Services*** **[www.halifax.ca/rec](http://www.halifax.ca/rec)**

Mr. Stapledon explained that an ad-hoc committee was formed about eight years ago called the Inclusion Committee to try to address issues that were arising at that time.

This Committee discovered that parents of children with disabilities were having a difficult time finding out what services and programs were available for their children and set out to provide this information. Mr. Stapledon explained that the Inclusion Committee also provided Community and Recreation Services with this list of programs, allowing them to better help their clients in finding appropriate services if HRM was not providing a program that worked.

Mr. Stapledon explained that about 150 copies of The Play Book have been printed, and it can also be found online. It is very specific to sport and recreation. The Inclusion Committee heard from parents that they were willing to travel to provide their children with programming to other parts of the province and other Atlantic provinces. A new internship student with Community and Recreation will be updating the list of services that is provided on the website to include other areas.

Mr. Stapledon explained that The Play Book is not the property of HRM but the property of those who need it. He explained that the resources provided in the Play Book will be provided to the group that is working on 211- the version of 811 for individuals with disabilities – to provide them with resources and also assist them in anticipating questions that might come in.

HRM offers to adapt their program in order to fit individual needs but Mr. Stapledon explained that this was not the ideal situation for everyone. He has been looking to The Choice Model from Toronto which focuses on different choices and specialized programming. For example, providing a swim class that is solely for individuals with visual impairment as a choice rather than adapting a regular swim class.

The Chair asked whether or not Mr. Stapledon had contacted the HRM Customer Service Centres to provide information about The Play Book because she had found that they were not aware of the resource. Mr. Stapledon confirmed that he had emailed all department managers with information about The Play Book and where to find it online.

Councillor Blumenthal asked whether or not HRM would be building accessible playgrounds. Mr. Stapledon explained that Parks is not under his jurisdiction but that his division has been working with Parks to try to build accessible playgrounds where possible. Councillor Blumenthal asked whether or not provincial funding would be available to fund accessible playgrounds. Mr. Stapledon stated that the province has a grant that has been accessed by community groups to assist in funding accessible playgrounds.

Mr. Nauffts asked Mr. Stapledon to make sure that the individual updating their website was aware of the 2.0 Accessible Standards because he was having difficulties viewing the list of programs on their website.

Ms. Newcombe and the Chair both had questions about facilities missing from the list in The Play Book and Mr. Stapledon explained that updating that list will be part of the update in December.

Mr. Stapledon shared with the Committee that on top of his role with Community and Recreation Services he is also a part of the Recreation Inclusion Network which is made up of representatives from a number of different interested organizations including Dalhousie University and Sport Nova Scotia to encourage better communication between organizations and avoid duplication of services.

Councillor Wile asked Mr. Stapledon where funding might be accessed to purchase and install a lift in the pool at the Canada Games Centre. Mr. Stapledon explained that there were a number of sources that the Canada Games Centre could apply to for funding for that type of lift, Councillor Blumenthal suggested the Edwards Foundation. Mr. Stapledon explained that if the Canada Games Centre had issues applying for such a grant that his division would also be able to assist the Centre in doing that.

Mr. Boyd asked whether or not track racing for individuals with disabilities has been considered for The Emera Oval in the summer. Mr. Stapledon explained that they would partner with Para-Track Nova Scotia who already has programming and equipment for this and see what was possible.

Mr. Nauffts asked what programs they have for individuals who are blind and visually impaired. Mr. Stapledon explained that they do not have specialized programming, and at this time an individual would have to provide a list of their specific needs and have a program adapted for him. He also noted that they are trying to figure out how to better classify things and identify where other choices are needed without competing with other organizations who are already offering those programs (for example Basketball Nova Scotia providing wheelchair basketball).

## **6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & PRESENTATIONS**

### **6.1 Correspondence – None**

### **6.2 Petitions - None**

### **6.3 Presentation - None**

## **7. REPORTS**

### **7.1 Update on Accessibility Assessment of HRM Owned/Operated Buildings**

#### **7.1.1 Staff Update**

Mr. Young provided an update to the Committee on a number of facilities, including:

- **Needham Centre** - Mr. Young explained that an issue has come up at the Needham Centre with licensing because the lift is so close to the water that it comes with some specialized requirements that he is currently working on. The Chair told the Committee that she got a big hug at the Needham Centre a few weeks ago because of the investments that the Committee has made in doors there. Mr. Young advised at the request of the Committee that it is not possible to make the parking lot bigger, that instead he is arranging to have things re-painted to accommodate accessible parking.
- **BMO Centre** – The door operators for the sledge hockey doors are in and the electrician is now working on connecting them.
- **Sackville Sports Stadium** – The last door operator by the pool should be installed at this point.
- **Dartmouth Transit Terminal** – There have been some issues with a door that keeps opening and closing so Mr. Young is working on having that fixed now.

Mr. Nauffts asked which type of signage is being used at the terminal. Mr. Young informed him that it was the same textile signage he brought in to show the Committee last year. Mr. Nauffts noted that he has been hearing from individuals that they are having issues with the colours of the signage. Mr. Young informed him that they are working on changing out some signs to have a higher colour contrast.

There are a number of accessible features including tactile signage throughout the facility, 1200 ft. of directional stripping with directional change and tactile numbers on the poles at the stops, 30 tactile strips at the crosswalks throughout the property with roughly 50 in total. Mr. Young advised at the request of the Chair that he would set up a tour of the Dartmouth Transit Terminal for the Committee.

Mr. Boyd told Mr. Young that he found the areas with overhang in the upper area to have a low level of light and he foresees it being problematic at night. Mr. Young explained that they are continuing to install lighting and will not be able to properly assess the lighting issues until that has been completed. Mr. Boyd has also heard that the hand dryers in the ladies washroom are not at an appropriate height for individuals in wheelchairs. Mr. Young said that he would investigate. The Committee thanked Mr. Young for a job well done on the Terminal.

### 7.1.2 Committee Member Update

Ms. Bryant asked Mr. Young whether or not anything was being done about the Sackville Library because she has heard a number of complaints in the community. Mr. Young has been investigating this issue and estimates that it will cost about \$40,000 to fix the ramp at the Sackville Library. Mr. Boyd noted that the door width is not an

appropriate size either so Mr. Young should look at the doors before making any plans for the ramp. The Chair suggested that the Committee wait until November to make a recommendation on this facility to allow Mr. Young to have a chance to have a closer look and come up with a more accurate estimate. Mr. Boyd mentioned that the Committee had actually written a report on this facility that might be useful for Mr. Young to refer to.

Mr. Young wanted to bring to the Committee's attention the fact that the Halifax Wildlife Association has a Trout-A-Rama every year and because this year is their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary they are looking to make the event accessible. Mr. Young said there is currently a swimming area that they may be able to create an accessible path to. He is going to further investigate what would be involved and how much the project would cost but wanted to make the Committee aware of this.

## **8. ADDED ITEMS**

### **8.1 2012 HRM Volunteer Conference**

Information on the 2012 HRM Volunteer Conference Agenda was before the Committee.

The Chair informed the Committee that the Clerk's Office has agreed to pay for two volunteers to attend the conference, and Mr. Nauffts and Ms. Aitken have offered to attend on behalf of the Committee. The Committee agreed that Mr. Nauffts and Ms. Atkins should go through the workshop options and decide which workshops they would like to attend. The Chair also requested that they share with the Committee at the November meeting what they learned.

Mr. Stapledon noted that it would be great to have something on inclusion on the Volunteer Conference Agenda and said he would speak to his colleagues about having it on the agenda in the future, especially since the conference is for HRM volunteers and community organizations. Mr. Rutt mentioned that there has been a piece on inclusion on the agenda in the past.

### **8.2 HRM Election**

Mr. Nauffts shared with the Committee that he felt he was misinformed regarding accessible voting in the municipal election. He went to vote independently after being told that it was a fully accessible process and was unable to vote independently because they had no large print or brail voter ballots or a computer for him to access at the polling station that he went to. Councillor Blumenthal mentioned that voting online and on the phone was accessible but Mr. Nauffts said that he could not read his user name and PIN, which would have been delivered in the mail, in order to be able to access those services. Mr. Nauffts went to the voting station on Victoria Rd. in Dartmouth and when he went in the door he stood in the doorway for a long time. No



one informed him that there was a sign instructing individuals to go to their right to vote and Mr. Nauffts was unable to see that sign.

The Chair said that she would ask the Returning Officer about this issue and report back to the Committee in November. Supt. Falkenham commented that at the polls he went into there were volunteers right inside the door waiting to direct individuals and assist anyone who may need help. Mr. Nauffts said that he even spoke to the supervisor at his voting station and he was unable to answer any of his questions but offered to assist him vote.

Ms. Bryant shared with the Committee that she expressed an interest in working the elections and was told that she was not fit to work as a result of her disability.

Mr. Rutt noted that all of these cases need to be documented and reported to the Returning Officer, who should be invited to attend the next meeting to discuss these issues with the Committee.

Mr. Aird suggested that the Committee request to see the elections accessibility policy so that they can provide feedback.

Mr. Nauffts said that he did vote but he was not able to vote independently as he was told.

Councillor Wile noted that many of the voting locations were in the gymnasiums of schools and that they need to be moved closer to the entrances, making them easier to access. Councillor Wile gave Halifax West High School as an example where there was a very long walk for voters and no bus access.

The Chair asked that discussion from this meeting be forwarded to the Returning Officer so that she can examine all of these issues.

### **8.3 Taxi Accessibility re: Service Animals**

An email dated October 12, 2012 from Kevin Hindle, Regional Coordinator, License Standards & Taxi/Limousine Municipal Compliance, was before the Committee.

Mr. Nauffts asked when the part requiring taxi drivers to escort individuals with disabilities to the first accessible door was added. The Committee believes that these revisions will be before Council tomorrow (October 23, 2012). Mr. Nauffts asked what time Council would be meeting and was told by Committee members that the public hearings would begin at 6 p.m.

Mr. Nauffts wanted to speak with Mr. Hindle to discuss the educational aspects of this, the Chair offered to invite him to come to the next meeting in November.

Mr. Boyd noted that he could take issues from the Committee to Mr. Hindle himself, as the Accessibility Advisory Committee representative on the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Committee. The Chair suggested that Mr. Nauffts contact Mr. Hindle to discuss the matter directly.

#### **8.4 Accessible Playgrounds**

Ms. Bryant noted that there is a major issue when a child in a wheelchair or with mobility issues cannot use a playground in 2012. She is aware of equipment that allows children with agility issues to use playgrounds but has yet to see it used prevalently here. Councillor Blumenthal explained that when a school is building a playground it is not just building the playground for the school but also for the community and that many playgrounds need to be accessible. He shared that organizations like McDonald's and the Edwards Foundation provide funding for this but you have to get in contact with them and fill out the appropriate applications.

Mr. Aird has a friend who owns a company called Green Gym who works in Halifax but sells his products all over the world and would love to meet with community groups interested in accessible playground equipment.

Mr. Young informed the Committee that playgrounds fall under a part of his department and there are about 1800 playgrounds in HRM. Mr. Young said that he would form a panel to look at playgrounds that are being retrofitted and upgraded to incorporate accessible features. Mr. Stapledon noted that in the United States a number of large companies such as McDonald's and Nike to sponsor accessible playgrounds. Right now Aviva Insurance has a vote on Facebook to build an accessible playground, and encouraged the Committee to vote.

Councillor Wile explained that she had an arrangement with Park West School who worked with their PTA and staff to raise money which was used to design and build an accessible playground for that school.

Ms. Bryant believes there should also be new guidelines to ensure that when a new playground is built at least part of it is accessible. Mr. Young said that he would bring it up to his department.

#### **9. NEXT MEETING DATE – November 19, 2012**

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 19, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. in meeting room 'Duke 1', 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Duke Tower, 5251 Duke Street, Halifax.

Ms. Bryant noted that she will be having surgery early in November and will not be in attendance at the next meeting because of the packing that she will have in her ear.

The Chair informed the Committee that the Prescott Group, who provides the Committee sandwiches and sweets each month, is having a fundraiser on November

24<sup>th</sup> and has invited the entire Committee to attend. The Chair said she would share all of the details with the Committee.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Jenny Benson  
Legislative Support

### **INFORMATION ITEMS**

1. Chronicle Herald article dated September 20, 2012 – “Metro Transit Lacking Onboard Announcements”