

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

December 3, 2012

PRESENT: Theresa Horwill, Chair
Tom Boyd, Vice Chair
Troy Nauffts
Cynthia Bryant
Marie Atkin
Lisa Pottie
Councillor Jennifer Watts

REGRETS: Mary Newcombe
Brian Aird

STAFF: Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Darren Young, Project Manager, Infrastructure & Asset
Management
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:10 pm, 3rd floor, Duke Tower, 5251 Duke Street, Halifax.

The Committee welcomed Councillor Jennifer Watts as the Council representative on the Committee.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 22, 2012

MOVED by Mr. Tom Boyd, seconded by Ms. Marie Aitken, that the minutes of October 22, 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 Councillor Watts – Interactive Mapping for Persons with Disabilities
- 8.2 Councillor Watts – Council Priorities

Councillor Watts requested that item 8.1 be dealt with as the first order of business, to discuss the matter with staff present.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Ms. Aitken, that the agenda be approved, as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

8.1 Councillor Watts – Interactive Mapping for Persons with Disabilities

Councillor Watts advised that she was speaking with a gentleman named Mr. Jamie Newman over the weekend about the idea of having an interactive map for individuals with disabilities. It would be designed using open sourced maps and would allow users to adapt some of the maps capabilities. For example, if an individual was going to plan a route and wished to take into account stairs, the grade of the incline/decline and other accessibility factors, this map would allow such alterations and allow users to rate the route for other users. The map would emphasize accessibility assets.

She noted that Mr. Newman is interested in connecting with individuals who have experience to provide him information about various accessibility needs. He is also interested in discussing the funding aspect of his project among other things.

Councillor Watts asked the Committee whether or not they would be interested in this initiative. The Chair noted that financially the Committee would not be able to support him. Ms. Pottie stated that it is an interesting concept that the Committee should be supportive of. Councillor Watts suggested that the Committee listen to his presentation and invite staff like Ms. Davis to attend to allow for a more informed conversation.

Mr. Boyd asked whether or not this software would provide information about construction and closures. Councillor Watts said that she was not sure how frequently it could be updated but that comments like Mr. Boyd's would be great feedback for Mr. Newman.

MOVED by Councillor Jennifer Watts, seconded by Mr. Troy Nauffts, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee invite Mr. Jamie Newman to attend and present at the next Accessibility Committee meeting. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Municipal Election Accessibility – *Lori McKinnon, Election Coordinator*

The Chair stated that Ms. Lori McKinnon was attending the Accessibility Committee Meeting in order to answer some of the questions that Committee members had arising out of issues on municipal election day.

Mr. Nauffts said that it was his understanding that electronic voting was to be available on election day which would allow him to vote independently at the polls. Ms. McKinnon informed Mr. Nauffts that electronic voting was available from October 6-18th which would allow individuals with disabilities to vote independently in the comfort of their own homes if they have accessibility software on your home PCs. She also noted that they had software set up at kiosks in libraries with headsets that would read out the words on the screen. This allowed individuals with visual impairments to hear their ballot choices. A DRO would then go behind the screen with the individual to click the candidate chosen and finish the voting process. Mr. Nauffts made the point that this is not truly independent voting because individuals with disabilities still require assistance from someone to click on the candidate's name. Ms. McKinnon also mentioned that they offered telephone voting which would allow individuals with visual impairments to listen to the prompts and be guided through the ballot.

Mr. Nauffts mentioned that in order to vote he needed a username and password which he understood had come in the mail to him. He made the point that individuals with visual impairments would be unable to decipher what their username and password are. Ms. Lori McKinnon said that they had a dilemma because they could not print the names in braille in the two week timeframe between when the nominations were finalized and when the actual election happened. Ms. McKinnon noted this as a valid point, although they had assumed that individuals with visual impairments would use the same method used to read their credit card statements that come in the mail for the username and password.

Mr. Nauffts further explained that he experienced further issues at the polling location because there was no one to explain to him where to go once he came in the front door of the building.

At the request of Councillor Watts, a member of the public in attendance described her own experience which she had emailed the Councillor about. She explained that the template was not properly lined up with the ballot so if you put your ballot in the template they would be misaligned. She stated that someone has to ensure that the template is lined up with the actual ballot.

Councillor Watts asked whether it was a different technology than 2009 and Ms. McKinnon explained that they were the same templates used. In both cases, if someone did not print the ballots with the correct spacing or if the hand-punched holes were incorrectly placed the ballot would end up misaligned. After a brief discussion with Mr. Darren Young, Ms. McKinnon agreed to continue a dialogue with him to ensure that the templates are improved and aligned for the next election. Mr. Young suggested that they should be laser cut and that he knows of two places in the city that can do this.

Ms. Bryant explained that she applied to work at a polling location. She said that someone asked her what her disability was and after Ms. Bryant explained that she is hearing impaired, it was suggested that it would not be a very good idea for Ms. Bryant to work at the polls as a result. Ms. McKinnon said that she was surprised by Ms. Bryant's statement because there were individuals with various disabilities working at polling locations and apologized for Ms. Bryant's experience.

Ms. McKinnon suggested that in 2016 they should establish the expectations of various polling positions and leave it up to each individual to decide whether or not they are capable of doing the job. She also encouraged all Committee members to apply to work the next election because they need great individuals working the polls.

Ms. Pottie asked whether or not Mr. Nauffts had heard about the options to go to the library or by phone and he said that he heard after the fact. Ms. McKinnon said that they tried to advertise these options as best they could but said that they had to be more effective in the way that they get the word out. Mr. Nauffts asked whether or not they ran the ads on CBC Radio and Ms. McKinnon said that they had, along with all of the other major radio stations.

Mr. Boyd brought up the fact that often polling stations are in schools and that often the schools have accessibility issues. Ms. McKinnon explained that she and Cathy Mellett, Returning Officer, had given themselves a mandate to make these past elections as accessible as possible. District Elections Officers were sent out to all of the locations used in the past with a checklist of things that should be looked for e.g. parking, accessible doors, accessible washrooms and then recommend the best buildings available so that they could be actively engaged. Ms. McKinnon said that any locations that had been brought up as unacceptable by accessibility standards would be examined again by DEOs to re-evaluate them before the next election.

Ms. Bryant said that there is a program on Eastlink called Inclusion Revolution and suggested that they be contacted next election to help promote accessible options for voters.

Ms. Bryant told the Committee that she had also inquired whether or not sandwich boards in schools could be used to direct individuals where to go and was told that there was not enough money in the budget. Ms. McKinnon said that this was true but that she understands the issue.

Ms. McKinnon thanked the Committee for their feedback and noted that she will take all of these issues very seriously. She suggested that if Committee members have further feedback they can contact her through the Clerk's Office or email election@halifax.ca.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 **Bayers Lake Transit Stops – Patricia Gates, Canadian Council of the Blind, Advocacy and Awareness Chapter and Peter Parsons, CNIB**

Ms. Gates explained that in partnership with a number of other organizations, the Canadian Council for the Blind is taking on an advocacy issue in Bayers Lake. She explained that Metro Transit stopped services to stores on the east side of Bayers Lake creating a number of issues including bus stops that are difficult to navigate and dangers associated with walking up a steep driveway with no sidewalk and through an extremely busy parking lot. She explained that this is not just a safety issue for individuals with visual impairments but for everyone.

Mr. Parsons suggested that a sidewalk is required on the east side of the road, noting that individuals have to walk up a driveway and across a large, busy parking lot, suggesting that there need to be sidewalks adjacent to the driveways and leading to the stores with crosswalks. He believes it would be easy to make this side of Bayer's Lake accessible with sidewalks and crosswalks if there was a sidewalk on the east side of Chain Lake Drive. Ms. Gates stated that they have met with a number of individuals already and that they will be meeting with the Deputy Mayor and President of the Disabled Persons Commission on Wednesday. They are planning to get all of the information and support that they need before meeting with the property owners to present a viable solution for everyone.

Mr. Parsons suggested that this might be symptomatic of a bigger issue, such as the lack of accessibility at Dartmouth Crossing and emphasized that this issue impacts everyone not just people with visual impairment. Ms. Gates stated that this has affected her independence because she has a right to have safe access to any of these stores and now she has to rely on her friends to transport her at their convenience.

The Chair said that she went to Metro Transit after a previous discussion with Mr. Parsons and Ms. Gates and Metro Transit stated that they are willing to put bus stops at the bottom of the parking lot. The issue is that Metro Transit needed to have permission from the stores to clean the sidewalks in the winter since its private property and the stores stated that they did not want the liability. Metro Transit also said it was not

possible to have the bus stops higher up because the speed bumps throughout Bayers Lake damage their buses.

Councillor Watts said that she was also hearing about this issue from residents while canvassing, from individuals with mobility issues who were struggling to get out to Bayers Lake particularly in the winter. She believes that the terms of the HRM approval process need to be more mindful about what pedestrian access may or may not be. She suggested that Ms. Gates and Mr. Parsons contact Mr. Taso Koutroulakis to find out their best approach on this issue.

Councillor Watts suggested that this Committee request a staff report on what the implications would be to have safety and mobility issues taken into account when creating large developments.

MOVED by Councillor Jennifer Watts, seconded by Ms. Lisa Pottie, that the Transportation Committee respond to this concern by focusing on safe access to infrastructure for pedestrians when examining new and existing developments. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Ms. Gates said that she has heard of a mall in Sackville that is completely accessible. Ms. Bryant said that she frequently goes to the mall (Downsview Mall) said that it works very well for her and individuals with mobility issues and visual impairments. Mr. Young said that this mall is extremely accessible because HRM was the developer. Ms. Gates also said that she had heard a new development was going to be going up by Kent that would be accessible.

Ms. Pottie asked if the main issue in Bayer's Lake was still that the bus does not stop there. Mr. Parsons said that this would be an issue for some individuals but not necessarily for those with visual impairments. Ms. Pottie said that for individuals with mobility issues this would still be the most significant barrier to independence. Ms. Gates said that with her mobility issues the bus stop being moved back to where it was would return her independence.

Mr. Boyd asked about how it works with the bus that drives right into the Halifax Shopping Centre because it would similarly be going on private property. He also asked if the bus goes into the shopping areas at Dartmouth Crossing. Ms. Pottie said she works there and it does not. Ms. Gates said that they are planning on eventually broadening their scope to include other areas.

Mr. Nauffts suggested the Chamber of Commerce be approached to explain the best practices around this and how businesses would get more business if they make their facilities more accessible. He noted that it makes good business sense to create safe access for pedestrians just like it makes sense to have the inside of your business accessible.

Councillor Watts asked if Ms. Gates could email the Chair providing them with feedback on their efforts.

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 & 'Accessibility – HRM Facilities' Budget

Mr. Darren Young said that the BMO door operators are now working along with the Sackville Stadium and the Dartmouth Transit Terminal has all of its accessible features up and running. The Needham Centre's electrical issues have now been solved and the lift may be operational by the end of the week. Mr. Young informed the Chair that the parking lot issues at Needham may have to be pushed back to the spring because of the weather.

Mr. Young informed Ms. Bryant that the Sackville Library is currently being investigated. The doorway was measured and declared sufficient but a number of Committee members have complained about the door so Mr. Young is going to double check. Mr. Boyd and Ms. Horwill will be going with Mr. Young to tour the Mooseland Fire Hall to see if they can assist in making it more accessible. Mr. Young has also been asked to make a beach accessible at Williams Lake Pond for Trout-A-Rama this year which would also allow for accessible swimming lessons throughout the summer. Similarly, he has been asked to look into having the walkway at Chocolate Lake more level from the parking lot to the beach. Additionally, he has been asked to make the first floor of the Dingle more accessible.

Mr. Nauffts suggested that the new Dartmouth Transit Terminal have a tactile listing of what buses go to each bay. Mr. Young said that the annunciation system should serve the purpose of alerting individuals appropriately and added that a sign designed to accommodate the listing of buses would be too large and considered a hazard. He said he would look to see if there was anything that could be done.

Mr. Young said that there is no real change in budget from last month but that the projects that he listed are likely to cost approximately \$200,000 combined. Ms. Horwill asked Mr. Young for the status of the Top 10 list of requests from the Committee. Mr. Boyd stated that the Top 10 were chosen because of the number of activities and people going to the chosen locations. He noted that things like the fish pond project

would be short-lived during the year and the Committee should be concentrating on the things that are most frequently used. Mr. Young explained that there are very few accessible locations for individuals to have a swimming lesson in a lake which would be accomplished through the Trout-A-Rama and Chocolate Lake projects. Mr. Boyd said that the community centre at Chocolate Lake is in need of a number of accessibility upgrades and the Committee's resources would be better spent there especially since it is on the Top 10 list. Mr. Young said that he is looking at these other items in addition to the Top 10 list. The Chair asked that Mr. Young bring the list of projects that were on the Top 10 list and have not been completed to date.

Ms. Pottie suggested that the Committee's terms of assessment based on numbers should not be the only tool. She provided the example that in her rural community there is only one library but everyone has to use it so it is very important that it be made accessible.

Mr. Nauffts suggested that there is a need to update the website to state which facilities are accessible since individuals should know about what services and facilities are accessible in their areas. He also suggested that a public service announcement would also be a good idea.

7.2 Committee Member Updates

7.2.1 Volunteer Conference – Troy

The Chair stated that the conference was held at the Holiday Inn in Dartmouth and that a lot of good information came out of the sessions. She was attending on behalf of the Halifax Police Department and found the workshops to be very helpful for her in that capacity. Mr. Nauffts said that he went to workshops on how to hold constructive meetings and building communities and reported that the meetings were nice with a high level of participation. He liked that individuals shared their challenges and things that they had found to be helpful in meetings. Mr. Nauffts also went to a presentation about the process involved in getting things done such as the HRM Streetscapes projects.

7.2.2 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – Cindy

Ms. Bryant said that she brought up trail signage for the visually impaired and learned that a pilot project is underway at First Lake Trails. There is also a trail project taking place in Lunenburg where seven trail groups have been joining together to link trails and provide consistent signage.

Mr. Nauffts stated that the First Lake Trails got their funding to create a number of tactile signs for the trails and there will be raised shapes and braille.

7.2.3 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – Ms. Theresa Horwill, Chair

(i) Taxicab Passenger/Operator Code of ethics

The Taxicab Passenger/Operator Code of Ethics was before the Committee.

The Chair asked the Committee to review the Code of Ethics and send any questions to Mr. Boyd since he is the Accessibility Committee's representative on the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group. Ms. Pottie noted that the Code of Ethics does not address accessibility issues at all.

(ii) Transport Canada – Disability Awareness Training

Getting on Board – Disability Awareness Training Manual was before the Committee.

The Chair commended the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group for upgrading to the Canadian standards.

The Committee watched four segments of the Disability Awareness Training videos that will be viewed by all new members of the Taxi & Limousine Group.

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.2 Councillor Watts - Council Priorities

Councillor Watts explained to the Committee that Council will be establishing their priorities tomorrow (Tuesday, December 4) which will establish the direction for the next four years. There are two issues on the agenda that the Councillor thought the Committee should know about. The AVL system is the first issue and the other issue is that Council is going to be re-visiting the idea of introducing more round-a-bouts in HRM. Councillor Watts noted that there will be opportunities for community input in those discussions.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE – January 21, 2012

9.1 Approval of the 2013 Meeting Schedule

The Accessibility Advisory Committee 2013 Meeting Schedule was before the Committee.

The Chair noted that even though the document circulated listed dates ending in 2012, it should actually be 2013. She also noted that starting in the New Year the Committee will be meeting back at City Hall in Halifax Hall.

MOVED by Ms. Cynthia Bryant, seconded by Ms. Lisa Pottie, that the Accessibility Committee accept the 2013 meeting schedule as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support

INFORMATION ITEMS

- 1. Transit Stop Annunciation – Update** (information report dated December 3, 2012)