

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

October 21, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Steve Craig
Lisa Pottie, Chair
Theresa Horwill, Vice Chair
Patricia Gates
Tom Boyd
Mark MacKenzie
Yvon Clement

REGRETS: Cynthia Bryant
Krista Daley
Bob Hayter

STAFF: Glenn Bannon, Manager of Operations, Metro Transit
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CALL TO ORDER.....	3
2.	APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – September 16, 2013 regular meeting and September 30, 2013 Town Hall Meeting	3
3.	APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS	3
5.	CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & PRESENTATIONS	3
5.1	Presentation – Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team, Halifax Regional Police	3
4.	BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES	5
4.1	Draft AAC Strategic Plan – Draft #3.....	5
4.1.2	Communications Plan	6
4.2	Future Presentations - Update.....	6
4.3	Town Hall Meeting - Debrief	6
4.4	Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission Complaint re: service animal refusal of taxi service - Update	7
6.	REPORTS.....	7
6.1	Update on accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings ..	7
6.1.1	Staff Update	7
6.1.2	Committee Member Update	7
6.2	Committee Member Updates	7
6.2.1	Active Transportation Advisory Committee – <i>Cindy Bryant</i>	7
6.2.2	Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – <i>Pat Gates</i>	7
6.2.3	Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee – <i>Tom Boyd</i>	7
7.	ADDED ITEMS	8
7.1	Portable Ramps	8
7.2	Transit Training Program	8
7.3	Representative for TIANS Accesibility Committee	8
7.4	HRM Volunteer Conference.....	8
8.	NEXT MEETING DATE – November 18, 2013.....	9
9.	ADJOURNMENT	9

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall on the Main Floor of City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

September 16, 2013 regular meeting minutes:

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Mr. Tom Boyd, that the minutes of September 16, 2013 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

September 30, 2013 Town Hall meeting minutes:

Ms. Patricia Gates noted an amendment on the first paragraph on page 4, the first word of the 5th sentence should read 'signals' instead of 'symbols'.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Mr. Tom Boyd, that the Town Hall meeting minutes of September 30, 2013 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Steve Craig thanked everyone who worked to put the Town Hall meeting together and noted the positive feedback he has received from attendees and elected officials, including the Mayor.

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

Additions:

- 7.1 Portable Ramps
- 7.2 Transit Training Program
- 7.3 Representative for TIANS Accessibility Committee
- 7.4 HRM Volunteer Conference

The Committee agreed to move the presentation from the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team to the first order of business.

MOVED by Ms. Theresa Horwill, seconded by Mr. Tom Boyd, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

This item was dealt with following the presentation from the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team.

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATION

5.1 Presentation – Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team, Halifax Regional Police

An information sheet on the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team was before the Committee.

Mr. Matthew White and Const. Heather Keyes from the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team (MHMCT) came to share information about their services with the Committee.

Prior to 2006 the service operated without police support and since 2006 MHMCT has been operating with the assistance of police. A large amount of police time and resources were being spent on mental health calls so a decision was made to combine the two services along with a partnership with the IWK. Partnership with the IWK allows HRM to provide mental health support across the age spectrum.

There is a difference between a psychiatric emergency and a mental health crisis. MHMCT was established as a much more expedient and user-friendly way to deal with mental health crisis situations.

The team responding to calls is composed of a mental health clinician and a plain-clothes police officer. For the police officers the training consists of 40 hours of intense training through Capital Health after which they can apply to go into the unit.

Before January, 2013 there was a focus in HRM but after a mandate that was put forward by the Department of Health and Wellness MHMCT's services are now available province-wide.

Clinicians receive calls from a number of sources including police officers, family members and doctors which are then triaged and assigned to teams where appropriate. The teams travel in unmarked police cars to avoid any stigma. The police officer is there to ensure the safety of the clinician, the individual experiencing crisis and friends or family members involved.

There are a number of steps taken to ensure that any risk of stigma is reduced and to take an approach that is as unintrusive as possible.

MHMCT takes an average of 1,200 calls per month and have been out in the community in response to about 100 calls in October, 2013. Youth call volume is consistent, hovering around 20%. Overall call volume has increased by approximately 10% since expanding provincially.

Ms. Gates commended MHMCT on the approach that they take and the person-first aspect. Supt. Falkenham shared with the Committee that Halifax Regional Police are working on getting all of their officers trained, Cst. Keyes shared with the Committee

that they are also hoping to get all of the dispatchers trained since they often receive related calls.

Police support is guaranteed to the team from 1pm to 1am seven days a week. MHMCT provides 24 hour phone service and if there is an urgent situation outside of police support hours MHMCT will call emergency services for assistance.

Councillor Watts explained to the presenters that AAC is working to broaden the scope of its mandate to include mental health issues and asked for direction around this. Mr. White suggested that the Committee invite someone from the Healthy Minds Cooperative or the Schizophrenic Society to come and discuss the types of challenges they have faced and how the Committee might be of assistance.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Draft AAC Strategic Plan – Draft #3

The Strategic Plan Draft #3 was before the Committee.

The Chair shared with the Committee that Ms. Krista Daley could not attend the meeting as a result of another commitment so there will be an updated version distributed to the Committee in advance of next month's meeting for discussion in November.

Councillor Watts suggested that the folks who have committed to various areas begin meeting to work through the details. Councillor Craig requested that some more finite timelines and deadlines be established and that the Committee move forward on the things that it intends to complete.

The Committee agreed that they require clarity around the level of support that it will be receiving to Update/revamp website.

Councillor Watts suggested that the Accessible Transit Advisory Committee (ATAC) which is Metro Transit's accessibility committee be worked with to solve accessibility issues related to Metro Transit. She noted the importance of strengthening the links between the AAC and ATAC. It was suggested that perhaps there should be a combined meeting to strengthen that relationship.

On the 'Participate in HRM Consultations' section, Councillor Craig shared with the Committee that they need the various HRM departments to embed the Accessibility Committee in these consultation processes as opposed to the Committee having to inject themselves into the process.

The Committee discussed whether they need to re-visit and revise their terms of reference as a starting point for this strategic planning exercise or if the terms of reference will be revised after the Committee identifies its new priorities and functions.

Councillor Craig shared with the Committee that as a result of all of their activities the Accessibility Committee has raised their own profile and more individuals and organizations are taking note of the Committee's existence and role. The Councillor noted that as a result of this attention expectations of the AAC have been raised.

Councillor Watts noted that the Committee is continuing to collect information and has presentations scheduled that will inform them around things they may wish to make a priority.

Councillor Watts also raised an issue for new developments and a lack of follow up in terms of buildings including the appropriate number of accessible units and renting those units to individuals in need of them.

For the next meeting the Committee agreed that they would discuss the Terms of Reference and strengthening the relationship with ATAC along with accessibility issues in HRM infrastructure. The Chair and Councillor Watts also noted that the presentation around Municipal Compliance be made a priority in terms of scheduling.

Councillor Craig requested that an updated list of all HRM facilities be distributed to Committee members for the next meeting including those that have been worked on and those that continue to require work. The Committee also requested that the list be added to the website so that HRM citizens can see the progress.

4.2 Future Presentations- Update

In November Ms. Pat Gates is going to discuss the difference between partially sighted and blind accessibility issues. Cathy Crouse, Executive Director of Metro Community Housing Association has been invited to speak at the meeting in November. In December, Jim Donovan, Manager, Municipal Compliance, will be coming to discuss the permitting of new and existing residential and commercial buildings.

The Committee discussed various presenters that should be invited to speak to the AAC regarding mental health issues. Suggestions included a mental health practitioner, mental health advocates and first-voice individuals.

The Chair and Councillor Watts shared that they will also have someone from HRM Communications come and talk with the Committee about the communications plan after the completion of the strategic plan.

4.3 Town Hall Meeting – Debrief

Mr. Mark MacKenzie said that action has already been taken on some of the issues raised at the Town Hall proving its effectiveness. Committee members asked that staff be on the floor at the same level as the attendees instead of on a raised platform. Mr. Boyd asked that the Committee get a better audio system for next time.

Councillor Craig suggested that next time attendees need to be 'welcomed' in a better way than they were and informed of where they can find refreshments. Ms. Patricia Gates suggested that next time the Committee have volunteers acting as sighted guides to make the event more user-friendly for everyone.

4.4 Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission Complaint re: Service Animal Refusal of taxi Service - Update

There is no update from legal at this time on the role of the Committee in relation to the Settlement Agreement.

6. REPORTS /DISCUSSION

6.1 Update on accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings

6.1.1 Staff Update

No update available as Mr. Young was absent from the meeting.

6.1.2 Committee Member Update

No update available.

6.2 Committee Member Updates

6.2.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – *Cindy Bryant*

Ms. Bryant was not in attendance and could not provide an update.

6.2.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – *Pat Gates*

Ms. Gates shared that most of the meeting focussed on new driver testing through the East Coast Language School. There was a discussion around whether or not drivers know appropriate safety precautions for different types of seatbelts.

Mr. Boyd shared that there was a discussion around accessible taxis. There are twenty-four accessible taxis in service but some have never picked up individuals in wheelchairs. There was also a discussion around the fact that in the guide that is provided to drivers there is no information around care for passengers with accessibility issues especially in the case of an accident.

A number of Committee members heard that another individual who is blind was refused access to a taxi.

6.2.3 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee – *Tom Boyd*

Mr. Boyd reported that the Committee met on September 26th and had two excellent presentations on crosswalks.

Mr. Mark MacKenzie volunteered to be a representative on the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee starting in November following Mr. Boyd's departure.

MOVED by Theresa Horwill, seconded by Councillor Watts, that Mr. Mark MacKenzie be the representative of the Accessibility Advisory Committee on the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

7. ADDED ITEMS

7.1 Portable Ramps

Councillor Watts shared that she has been having discussions around issues with current buildings that are not accessible in their current format. At Mezza Restaurant they have portable accessibility ramp that can be put out on the sidewalk when needed and stored away when it is not. The idea is that eventually a decal will go up on various businesses that will identify that they have a portable ramp that can be put out on request.

Mr. Rutt, a Committee member who was absent at the meeting, expressed his concerns to the Committee regarding quality of ramps via email prior to the meeting.

Committee members agreed that this is a great option to explore.

Ms. Horwill requested that Councillor Watts share the website of the company who made the ramp that Mezza uses with Committee members.

MOVED by Councillor Watts seconded by Ms. Theresa Horwill that the AAC review options for portable ramps for existing commercial businesses in HRM and discuss opportunities for HRM to promote their use including potential linkages with Business Improvement Districts. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

7.2 Transit Training Program

Halifax Association for Community Living has created a Transit Training Orientation Program to make individuals feel comfortable using the bus system. Councillor Watts wanted to share this service with the Committee for their information. Councillor Watts suggested that the AAC have a representative from the Association come and discuss the program with the Committee.

7.3 Representative for TIANS Accessibility Committee

The Committee intends to build the requirement of a representative on TIANS into its new Terms of Reference. Ms. Pat Gates suggested that she may be interested in being the representative.

7.4 HRM Volunteer Conference

Ms. Pat Gates and Ms. Theresa Horwill will be in attendance at the conference but in other capacities. Ms. Gates will share information with the Committee following the conference. Councillor Watts suggested that Mr. Glen Bannon ask the ATAC Committee if they would like to send a representative.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE

The Committee will meet Monday, November 18, 2013, 4:00 p.m., Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle St., Halifax

9. ADJOURNMENT

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

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support