

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

January 20, 2014

PRESENT: Lisa Pottie, Chair
Krista Daley, Vice Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Steve Craig
Patricia Gates
Mark MacKenzie
Bob Hayter
Yvon Clement

REGRETS: Cynthia Bryant

STAFF: Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, HRM Human Resources
Darren Young, Project Manager, HRM Planning & Infrastructure
Ahmed Kidwai, Manager, Accessible Transit
Glen Bannon, Manager, Transit Operations
Damion Stapledon, Community Recreation Planner
Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – December 16, 2013

Ms. Pat Gates noted that “2013” should read “2014” in several spots throughout the minutes.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Mr. Bob Hayter, that the minutes of December 16, 2013 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

- 4.4 North Street Roundabout Project
- 6.2.5 Transportation Standing Committee update - *Councillor Watts*

MOVED by Mr. Yvon Clement, seconded by Councillor Watts, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

At the December meeting the Committee had requested the Legislative Assistant draft a letter to the Executive Standing Committee outlining a number of amendments proposed to the AAC Terms of Reference. Ms. Weagle clarified that any recommendations for amendments to the Terms of Reference will first need to be sent to the Transportation Standing Committee, since the AAC still report to that Standing Committee. This matter was further discussed under agenda item 4.2.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES/DEFERRED BUSINESS

4.1 Portable Ramps

The Portable Ramps Information Sheet was before the Committee.

Mr. Rutt explained that portable ramps are a great option for places where there is room to store them and room to put them out. He explained that they can be hazardous if used as a permanent structure.

Councillor Watts reminded the Committee that this is being examined as part of the Mayor’s Healthy Communities initiative, which will be before Regional Council next week. She suggested that the Committee wait to see what happens at Regional Council, and revisit this at the next meeting. Councillor Watts asked that the Committee be provided with the Healthy Communities report for the next meeting.

4.2 Draft AAC Strategic Plan – Draft #3/Terms of Reference for Review

Tables outlining the AAC Strategic Plan and proposed amendments to the AAC Terms of Reference were before the Committee.

Ms. Krista Daley, Vice Chair, lead the Committee's discussion of the Strategic Plan. The Committee discussed outstanding issues from the December meeting which were the question of what body the Committee should report to and whether or not the role of the Committee should be in an advisory capacity. The Chair informed the Committee that while the Committee could report through a different committee than the Transportation Standing Committee, it cannot report directly to Council.

The Legislative Assistant advised that the Transportation Standing Committee is conscious of the far reaching nature of accessibility, and directs reports to other committees where appropriate.

The Committee agreed that the options regarding its role as an advisory committee should be put forward to the Transportation Standing Committee for consideration.

Mr. Stapledon shared with the Committee that their role and activities are similar to comparable committees in other jurisdictions especially with the level of staff and Councillors in attendance who influence and move things. Councillor Craig stated that there are no other committees with the number of staff at the table and the level of engagement.

Changes to be put forward are: for the Committee to continue as an advisory committee but include the role of staff in the Terms of Reference, to include the role of members of the Committee, to add that the Committee will follow a community consultation model, and to have an annual check-in on the terms of reference.

Councillor Watts thanked Ms. Daley for all of her hard work on behalf of the Committee.

MOVED by Mr. Mark MacKenzie, seconded by Mr. Bob Hayter, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee approve the proposed amendments to its Terms of Reference and the AAC Strategic Plan. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4.3 Taxi Incident – Yvon Clement

Mr. Clement shared with the Committee that his wife and her guide dog were refused by three taxis. When she called 3-1-1 she was referred to the Taxi Commission who asked for the roof light numbers of the taxis, information that Mr. Clement's wife would not be able to collect as an individual who is blind.

The Committee discussed the fact that this is an ongoing issue with multiple taxi companies and that while there is a law in place it is not being enforced.

Councillor Watts suggested that Committee members review the information distributed for item 6.2.3 “Information for Taxi Drivers in HRM About Passengers with Disabilities” handout. She asked if it would be possible to go back to the Taxi & Limousine Group to discuss that this is still an issue which is not being enforced.

Councillor Steve Craig suggested that Committee members think about ways that would enable individuals with visual disabilities to file a valid complaint without the roof light number. Councillor Craig committed to working on this issue along with Mr. Yvon Clement, Ms. Pat Gates, and Mr. Troy Nauffts, a former Committee member.

Mr. MacKenzie shared that he orders his cabs through an app which indicates which taxi was dispatched, which could be considered as part of a solution.

Mr. Rutt noted that a number of complaints related to individuals with service dogs being refused have come before the Human Rights Commission, demonstrating that this is an issue.

Mr. Josh Bates, Policy Advisory, Office of the Mayor, joined the meeting at 4:57p.m.

The Committee discussed the fact that there are 28 accessible cabs in HRM. Mr. Rutt informed the Committee that the accessible cabs take priority in the queue for getting a cab license and that their license is also for all zones instead of being designated to one zone making it very desirable.

The Committee were in agreement to invite Mr. Kevin Hindle, with the Taxi Authority, to the next meeting to discuss this issue with the Committee.

4.4 North Street Roundabouts Project

The Legislative Assistant indicated that staff are looking for feedback on the location of the service dog exercise area on Cogswell Street. This is further to the staff presentation at the last meeting.

Ms. Gates followed up with the Committee regarding her discussions about the service dog area. She shared that individuals who use the area have agreed that there should be a designated space within the urban core for a service dog exercise area but in a more convenient location. They are also hoping that the location changes soon and in consultation with the individuals who use it. Users have stated that while this is their preference, they will settle for a smaller service dog area in the same location if that is the only option.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Ms. Pat Gates, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee recommend that the Transportation Standing Committee request that staff look at relocating the service dog exercise area on Cogswell Street to a more accessible area located within the urban core, that has more

space, that the area be grassed, that the rules be clearly posted in writing and braille, and that the relocation be done in consultation with the individuals who use the area. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATION

5.1 Presentation – Access-by-Design: A Strategic Approach to Accessibility in HRM – *Gerry Post*

A Ten Point Accessibility Action Program for HRM was before the Committee.

Mr. Gerry Post stated that there are lots of positive things going on with regards to accessibility in HRM but a lot of it is independent activity rather than together. Mr. Post has developed a ten point action program to do that. Mr. Post suggested that financing should be made available with regards to accessibility through HRM.

Mr. Post reviewed the proposed Action Program.

Mr. Young clarified with Mr. Post that the capital budget money being spent on this would only be on HRM assets. Mr. Young also stated that HRM makes accessibility modifications when other upgrades are needed but Mr. Post stated that he is suggesting that HRM choose high traffic areas to make these changes even when other upgrades are not required yet.

Mr. Rutt shared that other provinces have passed new legislation regarding persons with disabilities. He suggested that if HRM were to take a visionary approach it would show leadership in advance of provincial legislation.

Councillor Craig stated that Mr. Post has done great work and a number of the things in his plan match the vision of the Committee and the Mayor but the implementation and timeline may vary.

Councillor Watts stated that she really likes the community-based aspect of Mr. Post's action plan and believes that will be a crucial aspect. She also asked whether or not a pilot project should be considered by the Committee.

Mr. Bates stated that in order to implement Mr. Post's framework, Council needs to adopt the vision of every community being accessible. The Mayor will be meeting with Council in the next week to encourage them to adopt accessibility as a core priority which will allow aspects of this plan to move forward.

The Committee thanked Mr. Post for his presentation.

Councillor Craig left the meeting at 5:42 p.m. due to another meeting.

6.2.3 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – *Pat Gates*

“Information for Taxi Drivers in HRM About Passengers with Disabilities” handout was before the Committee.

Ms. Gates reported that the Group discussed accessible taxis and issues with them at length, along with the fact that complaints are not being sent to 3-1-1. The group discussed the fact that accessible taxis jump the queue of drivers waiting for licenses and they have full access to all HRM zones.

Councillor Watts shared with the Committee that the Halifax Taxi Drivers Owners Association will be presenting to the Transportation Standing Committee on the issue of accessible taxis in HRM, and there will be more information available on this at the next meeting.

MOVED by Mr. Bob Hayter, seconded by Ms. Krista Daley, that the proposed additions to the Important Information for Taxi Drivers in HRM be accepted as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Chair said that the Committee would re-visit this at the next meeting with more time and that perhaps Mr. Kevin Hindle with the Taxi Authority could discuss this matter with the Committee as well.

5.2 Correspondence – Accessibility Parking

Two emails from Mr. James Orr and Ms. Wendy MacDonald, both with regard to accessible parking in HRM were before the Committee.

The Committee were in agreement, at the suggestion of Councillor Watts, to invite a staff member from Traffic and Right of Way Services to attend the next meeting to discuss this matter with the Committee.

This item was deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints.

6. REPORTS/DISCUSSION

6.1 Update – accessibility assessment in HRM owned/operated buildings

6.1.1 Staff Update

Mr. Young reported to the Committee that the Highfield Park Transit Terminal opened today.

6.1.2 Committee Member Update

This item was not addressed due to time constraints.

6.2 Committee Member Update

6.2.1 Damion Stapledon – Ottawa Accessibility Trip Update

This item was not addressed due to time constraints.

6.2.2 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – *Councillor Watts*

This item was not addressed due to time constraints.

6.2.4 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee – Appointment of an Accessibility Advisory Committee Representative

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Ms. Lisa Pottie, that Ms. Krista Daley be appointed the AAC representative on the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

6.2.5 Transportation Standing Committee – *Councillor Watts*

Councillor Watts shared with the Committee that the recommendation put forward at the last Committee meeting regarding a staff report to inform the process for requesting changes for the provincial building code specific to accessibility in homes was accepted by the Transportation Standing Committee. She also shared that a recommendation to Regional Council was passed regarding the implementation of zebra stripe crosswalk markings at marked, uncontrolled crosswalks in HRM.

7. ADDED ITEMS

Added items were dealt with earlier in the meeting under agenda items 4.4 and 6.2.5.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE – Monday February 17, 2014

The next Accessibility Advisory Committee will be held on Monday February 17, 2014, at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support