

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

February 17, 2014

- PRESENT: Ms. Lisa Pottie, Chair
Councillor Steve Craig
Ms. Patricia Gates
Mr. Mark MacKenzie
Mr. Bob Hayter
Mr. Yvon Clement
Mr. Troy Nauffts
- REGRETS: Councillor Jennifer Watts
Ms. Krista Daley, Vice Chair
Mr. Mark MacKenzie
- STAFF: Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, HRM Human Resources
Mr. Darren Young, Project Manager, HRM Planning &
Infrastructure
Mr. Kevin Hindle, Operations Manager, HRM Taxi & Limousine
Services
Mr. Taso Koutroulakis, Manager, Traffic and Right of Way
Services
Mr. David Lane, Planner, Planning & Infrastructure
Ms. Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant
Mr. Darcy Warren, Legislative Support

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1. CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax. Roll Call was taken.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 20, 2014

Ms. Pat Gates noted several typographical errors in the January 20, 2014 minutes.

MOVED by Mr. Nauffts, seconded by Mr. Rutt that the minutes of January 20, 2014 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

- 7.1 Animal Control By-Law
- 7.2 Web Site Accessibility
- 7.3 Automated Announcements for Metro Transit
- 7.4 Audible Pedestrian Signals
- 7.5 Accessibility Accommodation Options for Meeting Observers

MOVED by Ms. Gates, seconded by Mr. Clement that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES/DEFERRED BUSINESS

4.1 Correspondence – Accessible Parking

The following correspondence was before the Committee

- Accessibility Parking – James Orr dated December 15, 2013
- Accessible Street Parking – Wendy MacDonald dated December 13, 2013

Mr. Taso Koutroulakis, Manager, Traffic & Right of Way Services, informed the Committee that a list of accessible parking spaces in Halifax and Dartmouth may be found on the HRM website. He noted that seventy-four (74) spots are located in Halifax Downtown and thirty-four (34) spots in Dartmouth Downtown and a total of 196 spaces located throughout HRM. A map has been designed and will be added to the accessibility link on the HRM website.

It was noted that an Access A Bus parking on Spring Garden Road and Robie Street has not been cleared all year. Mr. Koutroulakis stated he would investigate the matter.

It was noted that the accessible parking signs indicate a 3 hour limit for parking. Mr. Koutroulakis indicated that the signs will be changed to also indicate evenings and weekends.

Mr. Nauffts expressed concern for accessible parking near the trails. He noted that certain trails have no off street parking, due to private land ownership. Mr. Koutroulakis indicated that Municipal Operations would be responsible for parking lots at parks and trails. Mr. Laughie Rutt, Diversity Consultant, advised that accessible parking is indicated in the HRM trails brochure.

Mr. Nauffts questioned audible pedestrian signals, he noted that you have to press and hold the button for four (4) seconds and, inquired if this information is on the HRM website. Mr. Koutroulakis responded that the website is going to be updated soon. He noted the importance of educating people and they need to know that the signal has to be held for four (4) seconds. Mr. Koutroulakis stated that navigating the website can be difficult, and that they are looking at ways to make the information easier to find.

Mr. Clement questioned when audible signals will be in place for Atlantic Street, Woodside and Shearwater in Dartmouth. Mr. Koutroulakis advised that HRM has a five year review and will prioritize where they are most needed. Mr. Koutroulakis informed the Committee that the Atlantic Street pole would have to be moved in order to have an audible signal. Mr. Koutroulakis assured the members that this would be looked into.

The Chair thanked Mr. Koutroulakis for attending.

4.2 Taxi Service Dog Refusal Incidents

A document entitled "Important Information for Taxi Drivers in HRM about Passengers with Disabilities" was distributed to the Committee for discussion.

Mr. Kevin Hindle, Operations Manager, HRM Taxi & Limousine Services, stated that by-laws are in place where service animals are permitted in taxis. If a taxi driver is allergic to animals, or scents, the taxi driver may refuse to transport a passenger with a note from a doctor. He noted the importance of complaint information being reported to 311. All information collected is provided to Taxi and Limousine Services and may require re-education for the driver and the option to rescind the taxi licence. Mr. Hindle also stated that it is difficult for blind people to know the taxi number, so they should call the taxi company (broker) because the calls are recorded and they will be able to track the taxi.

Councillor Craig stated that there is no reason for a service dog to be refused and it would be a human rights violation and an offence under By-Law T-1000.

Mr. Nauffts stated that you have to remember to request 311 to call back after making a complaint in order to have a follow up. A service request number is given to the caller and if you haven't heard back in three business days you should call HRM Customer Service.

Mr. Clement noted that when he makes a complaint, he has the complaint read back and then given a reference number and make sure that customer service checks the call back box. He questioned Mr. Hindle on what happens if you are not home for the return call. Mr. Hindle responded that when an officer returns the call and there is no answer, you should call 311, and staff can track the appropriate officer and e-mail them that you have returned the call. He also informed the Committee that in the near future citizens may make complaints on-line.

Ms. Gates recommended that the person call the broker (taxi) directly instead of just hailing a taxi. The dispatcher will make sure you get a taxi driver and vehicle that is appropriate.

Councillor Craig expressed the importance of educating persons with disabilities to always call 311 if there is an issue and always call a taxi company directly for pick up.

Councillor Craig responded that 311 is the front end contact for HRM and it's important that people know how it works. He suggested that a staff presentation be made to the Committee on 311 and accessibility at a future meeting.

The Committee reviewed Item 4.2: Important Information for Taxi Drivers in HRM about Passengers with Disabilities. The Chair requested that members review the document and forward her any suggested changes. The updated document will be brought back for discussion at the next meeting.

4.3 Accessible Taxis

Mr. Kevin Hindle, Operations Coordinator for Taxi and Limousine, presented to the Committee on the topic of accessible taxis, reviewing the following:

- There are thirty-four (34) accessible taxis in use in HRM.
- Nova Scotia Motor Vehicle Act section 305(4)(d) regulates taxis
- CSA section D409-02 regulates motor vehicles for the transportation of persons with physical disabilities.
- Accessible Taxi Driver qualification involves:
 - driver testing (language, knowledge of bylaw and streets in HRM),
 - National Standards Certification (administered by Tourism Industry Association of NS), and
 - passenger aid (drivers must be physically capable of passenger aid and a driver has a duty to assist the passenger within the vehicle and in the area around the vehicle).
- Driver compliance involves:
 - availability
 - fares
 - use of taxi meter
- Placing complaints involves initially reporting a complaint through the HRM Call Centre (311), followed by an investigation.

The Committee discussed the topic of accessible taxis with the following clarification provided by Mr. Hindle at the request of members:

- Bridge fare permitted to be charged by taxi drivers is \$0.80 per direction, while the passenger is in the taxi. This amount is set out in the By-law.
- All taxis (both conventional and accessible) must use the same fare schedule set out in the By-law. Drivers are not permitted to charge extra for service animals, nor for items like wheelchairs.
- An audible announcement system for fares would have to be researched by the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group.
- The Liaison Group is working on the development of a passenger code of ethics.

The Chair thanked Mr. Hindle for his presentation. A copy of the presentation is on file.

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

5.1 Presentation - None

5.2 Petitions - None

5.3 Correspondence - None

6. REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS

6.1 Temporary Sign By-Law Amendments Consultation

Councillor Craig left the meeting at 5:36 p.m.

Mr. David Lane, Planning and Infrastructure, made a presentation to the Committee on By-Law S-801, the Temporary Sign By-Law amendments.

Mr. Lane informed the Committee that Regional Council gave direction to Planning and Infrastructure on December 10, 2013, to address a proliferation of temporary signs along streets and on private property and regulate temporary signage throughout HRM. This includes banner, mobile, planter box, and inflatable and sandwich board signs.

In addition to allowing signs for private businesses, it allows for community events. Signs are largely controlled through licencing. The proposed amendments include election signs; for Municipal and School Board Elections signs may be posted on September 1; and for Provincial and federal elections signs may be erected after the issuance of the writ. Community Event signs will have a sixty (60) day maximum. There will be allowances for temporary signs to advertise apartment vacancies.

Mr. Lane further explained the proposed amendments for Mobile and Box Signs. He noted that there would be clarification on the duration of display, harmonization of separation distance between signs. There will be a fee incentive for box signs rather

that mobile signs. He informed the Committee that sandwich board signs will be a maximum of two feet wide by three feet tall and will be located in front of the business advertising.

Mr. Lane then spoke on the impact for sidewalk users. He stated that there would be a seven foot clear path preserved and will be enhanced by fewer obstructions. There would be improved sightlines and reduced physical obstructions. Sandwich board signs that are oversized will have a maximum three inch projection and be secured to the building wall.

Mr. Lane finished the presentation stating that there would be a ninety day period before the new By-Law takes effect, additional consultation with the sign industry and other stakeholders, and would allow for a transitional period.

The Chair thanked Mr. Lane for his presentation and the Committee then entered into discussion.

Mr. Clement expressed his concern for sawhorse type barricades that are sometimes used to indicate hazards, noting difficulties for visually impaired pedestrians using white canes to locate a saw horse. He noted that the concrete block is up on the sidewalk on Main Avenue and Titus Street. Mr. Chris Davis, Right of Way Services, responded that there should be a seven foot buffer so that the pedestrian zone is unobstructed. He indicated he would look into the barricade indicated by Mr. Clement.

Mr. Darren Young left the meeting at 6:24 p.m.

Mr. Clement noted concern with telephone poles having staples from posters, which are a hazard to pedestrians. Mr. Davis commented on the difficulty with enforcing posters, noting that there is no By-law for poster signs and it is considered freedom of expression.

A copy of the presentation is on file.

6.2 Update – accessibility assessment HRM owned/operated buildings

No update at this time.

6.3 Committee Member Updates

6.3.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – *Councillor Watts*

- **Appointment of ACC representative to ATAC**

Councillor Watts was not in attendance to provide an update.

The appointment was not dealt with at this time. Ms. Weagle stated that she would circulate the Terms of Reference and meeting schedule for the Active Transportation

Advisory Committee (ATAC) to Committee members to review and decide upon a representative at the next meeting.

6.3.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – Pat Gates

Due to time constraints an update was not provided.

6.3.3 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee – Krista Daley

Ms. Daley was not in attendance to provide an update.

7. ADDED ITEMS

7.1 Animal Control By-Law

Mr. Nauffts expressed concerns about dogs on long leashes. He noted that the By-Law does not state what size of leash is required. Mr. Jim Donovan, Manager, Municipal Compliance, responded that animals are under the control of their owners at all times and that there is nothing that can be done regarding the length of the leash.

7.2 Web-Site Accessibility

The Committee agreed to have someone from HRM to speak to the Committee regarding web-site accessibility improvements and plans.

7.3 Automated Announcements for Metro Transit

The Committee decided to discuss this item at the next meeting when Mr. Ahmad Kidwai, Manager, Accessible Transit, will be available.

7.4 Audible Pedestrian Signals

This item was dealt with under agenda item 4.1.

7.5 Hearing Devices for Committee Members

Mr. Nauffts inquired whether accessibility accommodation options for meeting observers should be listed on the Committee's webpage. The Chair advised that staff are able to assist with accessibility accommodations for meeting observers on an as needed basis. The Chair stated that she would have Mr. Young inquire whether there are hearing impaired devices in the new Central Library.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE – March 17, 2014

The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, March 17, 2014, at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Mr. Darcy Warren
Legislative Support