



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN HRM
MINUTES
June 16, 2014**

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

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
Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to the Committee are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/access/index.html>

The meeting was called to order at 4:08 p.m., and the Committee adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax. Roll call was taken.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 28, 2014

MOVED by Pat Gates, seconded by Troy Nauffts, that the minutes of April 28, 2014, be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

- 8.1 Canada Post Community Mailboxes
- 8.2 Service Dog Park – Troy Nauffts

MOVED by Krista Daley, seconded by Bob Hayter, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Accessibility Evaluation of HRM Pedestrian Infrastructure

At the April 28, 2014 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), a discussion was held on previous work undertaken over the last few years by Committee members in performing accessibility assessments of HRM owned and operated facilities, and making recommendation to staff for accessibility improvements required in those facilities. It was noted at that time that accessibility is a priority of the Mayor and members of Council. The Committee discussed the need for a focus on the exterior pedestrian environment, such as bus stops, sidewalks, and curb cuts, which may present safety concerns for those with mobility issues.

The Committee approved a motion at that meeting recommending that HRM establish a process to identify and evaluate high traffic outdoor pedestrian infrastructure areas where there may be concerns for individuals with mobility issues such as bus stops, sidewalks and problematic curb cuts.

The recommendation was forwarded to the June 4, 2014 Transportation Standing Committee (TSC) meeting. The Committee wished for more specific information on the request, and directed the matter back to the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Councillor Watts commented that although she was not at the April 28th AAC meeting, she tried to convey to the TSC the work that the Committee has undertaken regarding improving accessibility in buildings, based on the experience of the Committee in terms of accessibility requirements. She asked whether the Committee intended this to look at geographic areas, such as the Rehabilitation Centre, roundabouts, and pedestrian ramps at intersections.

The Committee discussed the intent of the motion made at their April 28, 2014 meeting. Committee members clarified that the intent was to ensure that Halifax has a process to identify standards for mobility and accessibility to enable those with disabilities to get around outside. The Committee questioned what the processes are and standards used for evaluating high traffic outdoor areas. They discussed the benefits of having accessibility standards ready and available for staff to follow when undertaking infrastructure and streetscape projects.

The Legislative Assistant indicated that this clarification would be brought back to the Transportation Standing Committee.

4.2 Construction Barriers

The following information was before the Committee:

- Extracts from AAC minutes of February 17, 2014 and April 28, 2014.

Mr. Troy Nauffts indicated that he has concerns with saw horse type construction barriers at construction sites, because they can be a hazard to everyone if they are blown down or knocked over. He indicated that they do not work well for those who use white canes even when erect, because the canes sweep below the barrier, and service animals may walk under them. Mr. Nauffts noted that they should also be placed back further from the edge of a hole. He suggested that pylons or snow fence type barriers would be safer.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

6.1 Correspondence - None

6.2 Petitions – None

6.3 Presentations

6.3.1 Halifax Public Libraries Universal Access Plan 2014-2016 – Heather MacKenzie, Halifax Public Libraries

The following information was before the Committee:

- Executive Summary – Halifax Public Libraries – Universal Access Plan 2014-16
- A copy of the staff presentation

Ms. Heather MacKenzie, Manager, Diversity and Accessibility, Halifax Public Libraries, presented an overview of the Halifax Public Libraries Universal Access Plan 2014-2016. A copy of Ms. MacKenzie's presentation is on file and online, and included the following:

- Priority Needs
- Objectives
- Key Actions – Year One: 2014-15
- Key Actions – Year Two: 2015-16

Ms. MacKenzie discussed the accessibility features of the new Central Library, and commented on public consultations that were held for input on the design of the building. It was noted that the CNIB and the AAC participated in the consultations. Ms. MacKenzie indicated that the project manager will get in touch with the Chair to arrange a tour of the new library for the Committee in the near future.

The Committee discussed assistive technologies that would be helpful for library patrons, such as CCTV, magnification, looping, and computers with screen reader technology. The rapid turnover for technology was noted, and Ms. MacKenzie indicated that they will be looking at technologies with a longer shelf life.

Mr. Nauffts discussed the use of a dongle, which is a memory stick which can be used to unlock licensed screen reader software. He noted it would be important to have staff trained in how the technology works.

In response to an inquiry from Councillor Craig, Ms. MacKenzie indicated that the focus of the plan has been on programming and staff, but they are open to feedback on physical accessibility barriers and will work with HRM on improvements to facilities.

Ms. Daley commented on a new library she recently visited in Ottawa, where they had a completely accessible teen room. She noted that it was the vision of inclusion, and encouraged staff to look it up.

The Committee thanked Ms. MacKenzie for attending.

7. REPORTS

7.1. Provincial Building Code Changes Update - Jim Donovan, HRM Municipal Compliance

The following was before the Committee:

- A copy of the staff presentation

Mr. Jim Donovan, Manager, HRM Municipal Compliance, presented to the Committee on the topic of changes being explored to the provincial building code to improve accessibility. This matter originated with the Committee late last year and resulted in a request for a staff report by the Transportation Standing Committee. Mr. Donovan indicated that the province is interested in conducting a technical analysis through a working group.

The technical analysis would include the following access areas:

- Audibility
- Visibility
- Functionality
- Barrier Free

And would include a review of national standards and regulations from across Canada. Mr. Donovan indicated that the review would focus on livability design as opposed to barrier free access, and could include the following design features of residential buildings:

- Levers on faucets and doors
- Control heights
- Entry door size and threshold
- Main level interior door openings
- Main level corridor widths
- Blocking in main level bathrooms near toilet & shower
- Out swing door main level bathrooms
- Plumbing rough in kitchen & bath basin drains (to be able to lower a counter for wheelchairs)
- Main level window sill height
- Substitute livability requirement for 1/20 (for buildings with four or more units)

Next steps of the review include:

- Ministers Committee
- NSBAC
- Ad Hoc Committee regarding accessibility in dwellings (TOR in August)
- Participation sought (staff plus 2)
- Report to TSC required

A copy of Mr. Donovan's presentation is on file and online.

The Committee discussed the topic with Mr. Donovan. Mr. Donovan clarified that the process would be all about changing convention and expectation. He noted the example that a grab-bar may not be required to be installed in a shower, but to have the blocking built into the wall to have the ability to install it, or by addressing interior door openings would fix problems with first responders being unable to open a

door without injuring patients. He noted that such improvements to the construction process would allow for easier conversion of buildings for aging in place.

The Committee thanked Mr. Donovan for attending.

7.2. Accessible Trails – Tactile Markers for the Visually Impaired – Troy Nauffts

Mr. Nauffts advised that the Active Transportation Advisory Committee approved a recommendation to the Transportation Standing Committee with regard to the installation of tactile warning markers during the re-construction of the Chain of Lakes Trail.

7.3 Dementia Friendly City Presentation follow up – Lisa Pottie

The Chair indicated that she was contacted by Janice Chalmers who presented to the Committee earlier in the year with regard to the Dementia Friendly City concept. Ms. Chalmers was wondering if there was any follow up direction from the Committee with regard to the information presented.

The Committee discussed the matter and agreed that due to workload, it is not something the Committee could take on at this time.

It was noted that there has been a provincial committee set up to develop the province's first strategy to improve treatment and care for people with dementia, of which Ms. Chalmers has been appointed. Supt. Falkenham indicated that he had forwarded the presentation materials to Halifax Regional Police training staff for their information and reference.

7.4 Update – Accessibility Assessment HRM Owned/Operated Buildings

Mr. Young updated the Committee on ongoing accessibility improvements to HRM owned and operated buildings, noting the following:

- A three year standing offer with Royal Doors has been signed for door operators (98 door operators have been installed in the last 3 years)
- An accessibility/emergency management audit on 34 recreation facilities is underway, using the form developed by the Committee.
- Visual fire alarms are being installed in facilities
- Plans are underway to rework the pavilion entrance of Acadia Centre in Sackville.

The Committee discussed communicating these good news stories with the public.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Mr. Nauffts, that HRM communications be requested to look at accessibility initiatives over the past year, for internal and external communications. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Mr. Young indicated that he has a briefing prepared of all accessibility improvements made to HRM owned/operated facilities since 2011, and that he would bring this forward to the Committee.

Mr. Nauffts commented that hearing about improvements to services and facilities may bring people back who were put off by poor experiences in the past.

7.4 Committee Member Updates

7.4.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – Bob Hayter

Councillor Watts noted that the Active Transportation Priorities Plan is now online, and asked the Legislative Assistant to circulate the link to the Committee for review.

7.4.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – Pat Gates

Ms. Gates provided a brief updated on the activities of the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group, commenting that discussions were held at the last meeting on accessible taxi issues such as licenses not being posted where visible, and there only being one accessible taxi for the airport. She noted that there is a mystery rider project underway, to identify problems with service.

7.4.3 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee – Krista Daley

Ms. Daley provided a brief updated on the activities of the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee, commenting that zebra crosswalks are being implemented and Crosswalk Safety Awareness Day will be held in the fall.

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Canada Post Community Mailboxes

Councillor Craig updated that he and Chris Davis with Traffic and Right-of-Way services are meeting with Canada Post regarding community mailbox installation in HRM. He indicated that he will report back to the Committee.

The Committee discussed issues to be considered with the placement of the community mailboxes, including:

- Barrier free access
- safety for those with mobility issues
- the ability to physically access the boxes (ie. Height for those in using wheelchairs)
- Safe ice and snow removal maintenance

8.2 Service Dog Park – Troy Nauffts

The Legislative Assistant provided an update from staff on the possible relocation of the service dog exercise area on Cogswell. She advised that a meeting is being scheduled with Real Property Planning staff to identify opportunity sites for the new service dog park. Once sites are proposed, staff will meet with the Advisory Committee to review before confirming a new location, and this will likely take place before the end of the summer.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – July 21, 2014, 4:00 p.m., Halifax Hall, main floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

Jennifer Weagle
Legislative Assistant

INFORMATION ITEMS - None