



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN HRM
MINUTES
November 17, 2014**

PRESENT: Lisa Pottie, Chair
Krista Daley, Vice Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Steve Craig
Yvon Clement
Troy Nauffts

REGRETS: Bob Hayter
Patricia Gates
Mark MacKenzie

STAFF: Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Laughlin Rutt, Human Resources
Damian Stapledon, Community Recreation
Bill Sampson, Metro Transit
David McCusker, Strategic Transportation Planning
Kelly Marney, Webmaster
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support

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.php>

The meeting was called to order at 4:10 p.m., and the Committee adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax. Roll call was taken.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 20, 2014 (regular) & October 29, 2014 (town hall)

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Krista Daley, that the minutes of October 20, 2014, be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

A revision was noted by Councillor Watts to the October 29, 2014 Town Hall minutes: On page 7, the report that Councillor Watts was referring to is with regard to extending the hours of the accessible washroom at Chocolate Lake.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Craig, that the minutes from October 29, 2014 the Town Hall Meeting on Accessibility be approved, as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

- 8.1 Update re: Portable Ramps for Businesses
- 8.2 Deferral of Election of Chair & Vice Chair to January

MOVED by Ms. Krista Daley, seconded by Mr. Troy Nauffts, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

The Chair confirmed that the motion passed at the October 20, 2014 meeting with regard to the Accessibility of Public Events will be going to the December 3rd Transportation Standing Committee meeting for consideration.

With regard to Central Library Tour Recap given at the October 20, 2014 meeting, the Chair confirmed that the NNELS system is what the province is using and the library wishes to support the Provincial Library Initiative. The Chair also noted that the library is open to feedback in this regard.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

6.1 Correspondence

6.1.1 Correspondence forwarded from Councillor Linda Mosher re: Sidewalk Access During Construction

The following information was before the Committee:

- Correspondence from Rhia Perkins to Councillor Mosher and Councillor Mason dated regarding Roadworks/Sidewalks was before the Committee.

Councillor Watts explained that there is a mechanism to deal with these sorts of issue but in this particular instance it seems that with such a large space and so many services coordination is a real issue.

The Chair suggested that this issue go to the Transportation Standing Committee to be examined with regard to enforcement.

Mr. Rutt shared that a number of years ago an individual came and spoke to the AAC about these sorts of issues and described all of the complications and logistics. Not all of the issues are Transportation and Public Works (TPW) issues but many lie with independent contractors. He suggested that this may have to be part of a tender.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Mr. Troy Nauffts, that the Transportation Standing Committee bring to the attention of Transportation and Public Works staff the need for greater monitoring surrounding the impacts of sidewalk closures and to mitigate these impacts provide safe passage of pedestrians, especially those with accessibility issues. Particular attention should be paid to locations where there are bus stops. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Mr. Nauffts and Mr. Clement suggested that it would be useful for individuals with visual disabilities to know in advance where the construction will be starting and which side of the street it will be on.

The Committee requested that staff come in to discuss the issues presented by Ms. Perkins and similar issues that Committee members have faced. It was noted that there are two separate issues to be addressed, a pedestrian safety issue and an accessibility issue.

6.2 Petitions – None

6.3 Presentations - None

7. REPORTS

7.1. Potential Sites for New Service Dog Park – *Planning & Infrastructure/Real Property Planning Staff*

The following information was before the Committee:

- Updated Proposed Service Dog Park Descriptions
- An Updated Map of proposed locations

The Chair shared with the Committee that the Planning & Infrastructure Staff are looking for the top four or five choices from the Committee, prior to coming back to the Committee in December for a formal recommendation to the Transportation Standing Committee.

MOVED by Mr. Troy Nauffts, seconded by Ms. Krista Daley, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee recommends that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend to Regional Council that two service animal parks be created, one in Halifax and one in Dartmouth. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Committee put forward the following Top 4 proposed locations:

1. Halifax, Option 2 – 5940 South Street, Special Education Authority site at the front yard of the Special Education School;
2. Halifax, Option 1 – 5940 South Street, Special Education Authority site at the rear of the adjacent parking area;
3. Dartmouth, Option 9 – Dartmouth Commons located near intersection of Windmill Road and Wyse Road;
4. Dartmouth, Option 10 – Dartmouth Commons located on a portion of former Nantucket Avenue right of way corridor.

On the Dartmouth side, the Committee requests that Option 10 be considered over Option 9 because park users would not have to cross the street to get to the bus. On the Halifax side Option 2 would be prioritized over Option 1 because of the proximity to the school.

The Committee requested that Ms. Weagle send the options onto these options to the appropriate staff.

7.4 Town Hall Meeting on Accessibility Recap

The Chair advised that there were a total of 55 people in attendance: 30 members of the public, 15 staff, 5 elected officials, 3 members of the Committee, 2 media.

Councillor Craig thanked everyone who was involved and spoke of the event.

A number of committee members shared that while there were not many people there it is good to move the meetings around to various locations. Committee members shared that feedback from their networks indicated that the location was too far out. The Committee asked that it be noted that they would like the meeting to be held in Halifax next year.

Councillor Craig requested that a status update be provided to the Committee outlining the questions presented at the Town Hall Meeting and actions that have been taken. In particular, he asked that the Wheelchair Challenge that was raised by a speaker be arranged. The Chair committed to following up with Ms. Nancy Beaton who sets up these types of events.

7.2. HRM Website Accessibility

Mr. Rutt introduced Ms. Marney to the Committee and explained that she had been asked to come and discuss accessibility issues with the Halifax Website.

Ms. Marney shared that her staff have been working on refreshing Halifax.ca and Phase I of the refresh project is now completed. While Phase I did not address all of the content, she informed Committee members that it did address the template that wraps around all of the content. She also stated that staff are working with 2.0 Level A Standards and have achieved Level AA Standards in a number of areas.

7.2.1 Policy Statement

Mr. Rutt shared with the Committee that he invited Ms. Marney to share the idea of posting a Policy Statement regarding the accessibility of the website so that the public can see the progress that staff have made and the vision around this project.

Ms. Marney shared that a policy cannot be posted at this time because some components have yet to be approved.

The Committee suggested that Communications staff prepare a draft statement and share it with the Committee for their feedback.

Councillor Watts suggested that an overall updated overview would be a good tool to have that would demonstrate where the municipality is going and the current status of each accessibility initiative. Mr. Stapledon shared with the Committee that many municipalities provide an Annual Accessibility Report, something that the Committee agreed should be considered by Halifax. The Chair also suggested that a strategic plan would be a great tool.

The Committee requested that staff from Communications come to an AAC meeting so that a Policy Statement can be written and posted on the website. Committee members noted that a motion was previously passed requesting that communications staff come to a meeting and asked that the motion be followed up on.

The Committee had a lengthy discussion with Ms. Marney around whether or not links to applications can be included on the website. She shared that while Halifax is supplying some data through the Open Data Project there is no clear policy around providing tools on the website.

7.2.2 BrowseAloud Program

Committee members were pleased to hear that the BrowseAloud program is no longer available on the Halifax website and that the funding that was previously allocated to this program is being put into making the website more accessible.

Ms. Marney informed the Committee that a piece of software called Bunkered is being used on Halifax.ca. If you click on the 'Feedback' button and it will pinpoint where exactly the issue is on the page and will send a message to the website folks.

Mr. Rutt thanked Ms. Marney for attending the meeting and sharing her knowledge. Ms. Marney encouraged Committee members to contact her with any questions.

7.3. Discussion – How to ensure street changes (i.e. bike lanes, parking) are considerate of the needs of persons with disabilities

The Proposed Changes to Accessible Parking and Taxi Stands on University Avenue was before the Committee.

Mr. David McCusker from Strategic Transportation Planning informed the Committee that Dalhousie University has requested that a bike lane be created on University Avenue. It will have a defined plastic divider. There will be a pilot installation for two years. Changes can be made throughout the two years and it can be taken down if the pilot does not go well. All on-street parking on University Avenue and Robie Street will be removed but additional accessible parking spaces created, increasing the number from 2 to 9.

Ms. Daley shared that she has heard a number of issues around the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium because the parking will be on the side but there will not in front where all of the accessible features are located.

Councillor Watts stated that there is a larger question around these types of changes being appropriately communicated and that measures need to be taken to ensure that individuals with disabilities are well-informed. Mr. McCusker agreed that having individuals come to the Committee to discuss these sorts of changes would be helpful in a number of circumstances.

Mr. Nauffts asked whether or not the Access-A-Bus will be able to pick up and drop off at the university.

Mr. Rutt shared that having accessible parking on a side street will be safer for many wheelchair users. He also suggested that if Halifax had an accessibility policy it would be helpful for projects like this.

The Committee thanked Mr. McCusker for coming.

7.5 Update – Accessibility/Assessment HRM Owned/Operated Buildings

This item was not addressed.

7.6 Committee Member Updates

7.6.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – *Bob Hayter*

This item was not addressed.

7.6.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – Pat Gates

This item was not addressed.

7.6.3 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee – Krista Daley

Ms. Daley updated that the first annual Crosswalk Safety Advisory Day was on November 5th and went well.

There is a consultation session on December 3rd at the World Trade and Convention Centre for the Provincial Accessibility Act. Details can be found on the Department of Community Services website (<http://novascotia.ca/coms/accessibility>).

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Update re: Portable ramps for businesses

The Chair shared an update on this initiative from the Mayor's Office, noting that staff met with the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) earlier this month and there was a lot of interest in pursuing portable ramps for businesses. It was decided that the next step was for Transportation and Public Works (TPW) to send out the max height and width of possible ramps to BIDs, to see how many businesses would qualify. Once there is a sense of the scale of the project, the Mayor's Office is keen to help line up sponsors and volunteers. There was talk of possibly having a "build day" at Grand Parade in the spring. TPW staff have been asked to provide an update at the December 15th AAC meeting.

Mr. Clement shared that wheelchairs and walkers have a difficult time inside the Forum getting around. Councillor Watts suggested that individuals call 3-1-1 so that the issues be reported because the Forum is going to be renovated and accessibility issues are a priority.

8.2 Deferral of Election of Chair & Vice Chair to January

The new members will be approved in January by Council. Ms. Krista Daley will assume the role of Chair for the December meeting.

The Committee thanked Lisa for being Chair, for her awesome leadership, her compassionate and engaging view, and for moving the Committee along. Councillor Watts stated that the Committee owes the Chair a big thank you with a lot of gratitude for advancing the agenda for accessibility. The Committee requested that the Chair share any useful information she comes across while in Toronto.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS – Monday, December 15, 2014 4:00 p.m., Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support

INFORMATION ITEMS - None