



**ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
December 15, 2014**

PRESENT: Ms. Krista Daley, Vice-Chair
Councillor Steve Craig
Ms. Patricia Gates
Mr. Bob Hayter
Mr. Yvon Clement
Mr. Troy Nauffts

REGRETS: Councillor Wayne Mason

STAFF: Mr. Taso Koutroulakis, Manager of Traffic Management
Mr. Jan Skora, Coordinator, Parks and Recreation
Ms. Margaret Soley, Coordinator, Parks & Recreation
Mr. Darren Young, Corporate Facility Design & Construction
Superintendent Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Mr. Liam MacSween, 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 Accessibility
Advisory Committee are available online:*

<http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/access/AACagenda141215.php>

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m., and adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, and 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 17, 2014

Councillor Craig noted that he was in attendance for a portion of the meeting held on November 17, 2014.

MOVED by Mr. Bob Hayter, seconded by Ms. Patricia Gates that the minutes of November 17, 2014 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

The Vice Chair suggested that discussion on Item No. 7.2 - Portable Ramps for Businesses be moved up on the agenda to take place after discussion on Item No. 4.1 – Sidewalk Access during Construction.

MOVED by Councillor Craig, seconded by Ms. Patricia Gates, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Nov. 17/14 AAC Motion re: Sidewalk Access during Construction

The following motion approved at the November 17, 2014 Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting was later ruled out of order, as it was direction to staff:

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. Taso Koutroulakis, Manager of Traffic Management, provided an update respecting sidewalk access during construction. He advised that the halifax.ca website has a traffic control supplement document which includes information pertaining to construction guidelines. He remarked that the document is updated every year and that all contractors that wish to do work within the municipality must comply with the guidelines. He provided commentary respecting the rules governing street closures and the criteria which applicants must follow to undertake construction on the sidewalk.

Mr. Koutroulakis explained that contractors are only permitted to close one sidewalk, on one side of the street at any time during the construction period, while ensuring that the other sidewalk on the opposite side of the road remains open to the public. He provided further information with respect to the process of applying for construction permits.

Councillor Craig inquired as to whom enforces sidewalk construction activities on the part of the Municipality. Mr. Koutroulakis responded by stating that enforcement depends on the nature and type of work that is being completed. He advised that Engineering Assistants, Construction Inspectors and Site Supervisors all play a role in ensuring that the proper enforcement of the rules takes place.

Councillor Craig noted that in areas where there are fewer intersections, it could be the case that there is a barrier on the sidewalk that is more than a kilometer away from the nearest intersection for a pedestrian to cross the street.

Mr. Koutroulakis agreed and commented that all sidewalk closures are site specific. He noted that it is incumbent upon the contractor to provide notification of a sidewalk closure as far in advance as possible. He further advised that the contractor must also place a sign and a barricade at the beginning of the block to make it as noticeable for pedestrians.

Mr. Nauffts inquired as to whom is accountable if there is an issue of non-compliance with the regulations on the part of the contractor. Mr. Koutroulakis responded that the Development Engineer who issued the construction permit is responsible for rectifying any problems associated with non-compliance on the part of the contractor.

In response to a follow up question from Mr. Clement, Mr. Koutroulakis commented that in areas where there are sidewalks, contractors have to provide a reasonable area for pedestrians to move around the work that is being completed. He advised that contractors are not permitted to have members of the public walking through a construction site.

Further discussion ensued with Mr. Koutroulakis providing commentary on the various procedures that are in place respecting side walk construction in HRM.

7.2 Portable Ramps for Businesses

Mr. Taso Koutroulakis, Manager of Traffic Management and Mr. Josh Bates, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Mayor, provided an update respecting portable ramps for businesses in HRM.

Mr. Koutroulakis commented that Mayor Savage has, through the healthy communities action plan, worked with the Business Improvement Districts to help install portable ramps for wheel chair accessibility to provide better access to downtown businesses. He advised of research conducted by staff on a similar program used in Toronto known as Stop Gap. He stated that it is a fantastic initiative and commented that the Business

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Improvement Districts were approached as partners to make the program a success in HRM.

Mr. Koutroulakis explained that the portable ramps will work for businesses where the entrance step is no higher than 9 inches. He provided further information pertaining to the design of the proposed ramps and asked Mr. Bates to provide further commentary respecting the roll out of the program.

Mr. Bates commented that the Mayor's Office had decided to kick start the program, after the initial research had been conducted by staff. He advised that the Mayor's Office has now been tasked with the job of getting the ramps to participating businesses within the community. He explained that the Parker Street Skills Development Centre will be constructing the ramps and noted that that two ramps have already been built. He commented that staff has approached the Business Improvement Districts to help generate more interest among business owners.

Mr. Clement inquired if HRM facilities will be using the ramps or will it just be an initiative for private businesses. Mr. Bates noted that the program targets privately owned businesses which only have one step required to access the property.

Mr. Koutroulakis commented that based upon the feedback which has been received; the businesses must be able to accommodate the proper slope for a wheel chair. He further advised that the ramp will need to be portable and not too heavy. He stated that he does not believe that amendments will be required to any of the encroachment by-laws for their usage and that the ramps are meant to be as user friendly as possible.

In response to a follow up question, Mr. Bates commented that the smallest step required for the ramp to be utilized by a business is three inches, while the largest is seven inches.

The Chair inquired if it is possible for ramps to be installed on a permanent basis. Mr. Koutroulakis commented that the ramp would need to be specific to a particular facility. He commented that staff hopes to roll the program out in full force in 2015.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

6.1 Correspondence – NONE

6.2 Petitions – NONE

6.3 Presentation – NONE

6.3.1 Mapability.ca Update & Demo – Jamie Newman, JCN Performance Consulting Ltd.

The Chair invited Mr. Jamie Newman, of JCN Performance Consulting Ltd., to give a presentation on Mapability.ca

Mr. Newman thanked the Committee for allowing him to provide an update on Mapability.ca, an online accessibility mapping program which provides information to commuters respecting accessible routing for cities and public buildings. He noted that a great deal of work has been completed since his last presentation to the Committee which took place in the previous year.

Mr. Newman provided a demonstration of the website by inputting a starting point and destination, highlighting special features which identify accessibility barriers such as construction work and large flights of stairs for commuters. He advised that the program also points out areas of interest, such as historical properties and public art for commuter's taking a particular route. He commented that the program allows for users to provide feedback as well as rate their experiences. He stated that further work is being completed on the website which will allow users the ability to customize their individual disabilities so that the program can generate the most effective route.

Mr. Newman advised of future plans to map the inside of public buildings and commented that his organization is working with Capital Health to establish routes for the interior of the Halifax Infirmary. He remarked that the updated city map is scheduled to be released to early users in January of 2015.

Mr. Newman explained that a version of the program was released to users in advance of the presentation to the committee to gain feedback of accessibility in the community and to provide a demonstration of the service. He noted the following comments from the users:

- Concerns regarding accessibility on sidewalks including insufficient curb cuts at the Hydrostone Park.
- Issues respecting improperly maintained sidewalk surfaces which have accumulated ice and snow negatively affecting his walk.
- Concern with people congregating and smoking in public sidewalks.

Mr. Newman commented that the goal for his organization is to work with Halifax to obtain more data which will allow for the expansion of the service. He commented that he would like to begin discussions with Regional Council respecting a potential partnership with the municipality to enhance mapability.ca and reach more people in the community.

The Chair thanked Mr. Newman for his presentation and requested questions from the Committee regarding the presentation.

Mr. Naufffts inquired if there is an option for text services on the website for those who are unable to see the pictures associated with a proposed route.

Mr. Newman commented that there is a direction panel within the program which provides via text, the directions associated with a proposed route. He stated that future upgrades to the program in terms of web accessibility will be implemented in the future, subject to the program budget.

Councillor Craig thanked Mr. Newman for the presentation and commented that a great deal of the information regarding routing will likely be populated by the programs users. He inquired as to who is responsible for updating the mapping information to ensure that the routes are accurate and whether or not audible feedback is an option for those who have visual impairments.

Mr. Newman replied that the ideal model for his organization would be to work with the municipality to get as much information as possible to set a base line of information pertaining to routing, and to set up further access to the program. He advised that his company is working to implement screen readers, and audible GPS but is also subject to budgetary constraints.

Ms. Gates inquired if there is a cost to the user to access the website.

Mr. Neman responded that there will be no cost to the user to access the website and advised that the clients under the proposed model would be hospitals, schools and municipalities who benefit from having a service which maps accessibility. He commented that without users the platform that he is proposing would not be useful.

The Chair thanked Mr. Newman again for his presentation.

7. REPORTS/DISCUSSION

7.1 Potential Sites for New Service Dog Park

The following was before the Committee:

- A staff presentation dated December 15, 2014

Mr. Jan Skora, Coordinator, Parks and Recreation, and Ms. Margaret Soley, Coordinator, Parks and Recreation, provided a presentation on Potential New Sites for Dog Service Parks.

Mr. Skora advised that the South Street property as identified by staff would have been an ideal location for a new dog service park but noted that the land is not owned by the municipality but rather, the by the province. He commented that the province has other plans for the land.

Mr. Skora provided further commentary with respect to several other identified sites and noted that the land for the Dartmouth Common site cannot be used as it is restricted to

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a specific use. As a result, he commented that a fence cannot be erected on the property.

Mr. Skora noted that staff have looked closely at site numbers four, six, and eight, and have determined that they are not a good match for the function of a dog service park. He remarked that site numbers fifteen and seven are likely the most suitable from the perspective of staff.

The Chair thanked Mr. Skora and Ms. Soley for their presentation and asked for questions of clarification from members of the Committee.

In response to a follow up question from Mr. Clement, Mr. Skora noted that staff would like to hear feedback from members of the Accessibility Committee with respect to the recommendations for potential sites.

Mr. Nauffts advised that many of the people that will utilize the park will come from all over the municipality and advised that the location that staff has chosen as a potential site on Chisolm Avenue would require people to take two or three buses to arrive at.

Mr. Skora inquired if the majority of potential users would take the bus to access the park.

Mr. Nauffts stated that the majority of individuals would walk or take the bus. He advised that some people may drive, but emphasized the importance of the site being on an accessible bus route.

Mr. Clement inquired if there will be further public consultation with respect to the process of selecting a site.

Ms. Soley noted that the intention of staff was to use the Accessibility Advisory Committee as the sounding board for ideas regarding the selection of a potential site. She commented that staff had not planned on holding a public meeting specifically, but could explore that option further. She commented on staff's main objective to utilize municipally owned land, if possible, and noted the following criteria which will influence the final decision pertaining site selection:

- Site is on accessible bus routes
- Site is near accessible on street parking
- Onsite parking is to be available
- Site is near an HRM Recreation facility
- Site is near an Active Transportation trail.

With respect to the proposed Northbrook site, Mr. Skora noted that it is close to the Woodland and Victoria bus routes and commented that it is more private than most of the others that have been identified.

Mr. Clement inquired if the proposed Northwood site will be bigger than the existing park on Cogswell Street in Halifax.

Ms. John MacPherson, Senior Project Manager, commented that staff are working with the same dimensions of what is currently in place on Cogswell Street. He advised that it will be a rectangular configuration and noted that he has had discussions with representatives from Eastern Fence who had advised that card readers could be installed at the proposed site, restricting access for those who would not use it for its expressed purpose.

Ms. Gates inquired if staff would be interested in speaking with guide dog users to assist in the selection of a potential site. She advised of an upcoming meeting of a local chapter of the Canadian Council of the Blind and noted that she could assist in convening the group rather quickly to provide feedback. She further advised that the next meeting of the CCB group is scheduled to take place on January 8, 2015.

Ms. Soley indicated that she would be happy to obtain feedback from the CNIB group.

Further discussion ensued with members of the Committee providing commentary on the merits of the potential sites.

MOVED by Mr. Troy Nauffts, seconded by Ms. Patricia Gates, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee endorse the recommendation of staff to proceed with work on sites seven and fifteen and to hold a focus group. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

7.2 Portable Ramps for Businesses

This matter was dealt with earlier in the meeting. Please see pages 3-4.

7.3 Update – Accessibility Assessment HRM Owned/Operated Buildings

Mr. Darren Young provided an update to the Committee regarding work being undertaken by staff on an Accessibility Assessment of HRM Owned and Operated Buildings.

He advised that staff has completed several audits of recreation centres related to accessibility upgrades as part of 2015-16 budget process. He commented that the new Central Library had opened last week and advised of the installation of sliding glass doors at the Dartmouth Ferry Terminal as well as the installation of new accessible washrooms on the main level. He further commented that the new Lacewood Transit Terminal will incorporate the same designs.

In response to a comment from Ms. Gates, Mr. Young advised that comments regarding accessibility issues for HRM owned or operated buildings can be forwarded to his attention.

7.4 Committee Member Updates (verbal)

7.4.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – Bob Hayter

Mr. Hayter gave a brief update of the Active Transportation Advisory Committee and noted recent work undertaken by the Committee pertaining to Active Transportation Trails in HRM.

7.4.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – Pat Gates

Ms. Gates gave an overview of the last meeting of the Taxi & Limousine Liaison group noting discussions relating to unlicensed private car services.

7.4.3 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee – Krista Daley

Ms. Daley provided a brief update regarding the work being undertaken by the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee.

8. ADDED ITEMS

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING –TBR

9.1 Approval of 2015 meeting Schedule

The following documentation was before the committee:

- The proposed 2015 meeting schedule

The following changes/corrections to the 2015 meeting schedule were noted by the committee:

- Monday, March 16, 2015
- Monday, September 21, 2015
- Monday, October 19, 2015
- Monday, November 16, 2015
- Monday, December 14, 2015.

MOVED by Mr. Bob Hayter, seconded by Ms. Patricia Gates that the 2015 meeting schedule be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

Liam MacSween
Legislative Assistant