

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

SEPTEMBER 18, 2000

Notes* (no quorum)

PRESENT: Paul Connors, Chair
Jane Cale, Vice-Chair
Cynthia Street
Maureen Reynolds (part)
Betty MacDonald
Darrell Robar
Bob Venus

ALSO PRESENT: Charla Williams, Diversity Coordinator
Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk
Sandra Spears and Bonnie Lyn Barker (interpreters)

REGRETS: Donald Mullins, Peggy Brown, Anne Langille, Councillor Blumenthal,
Donald MacDonald and Roel Vis

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There was no quorum for this meeting. While a number of members had conveyed their regrets, the importance of **all** members conveying their regrets was emphasized. If it had been determined before the meeting's commencement that there would not have been a quorum, the meeting could have been cancelled.

Concern was expressed that perhaps the change of time from 4:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. may be presenting a problem for some members. If this is the case, the members were assured that it could be looked at again at anytime.

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

Mr. Connors was in possession of information pertaining to the Community Grants Program which he distributed to members who desired copies. He noted that in Section 7 of "A Guide to Different Types of Community Grants, Eligibility and How to Apply", locations for picking up additional copies are listed.

0.1 IDENTIFICATION OF ATTENDEES

As requested at the last meeting, the meeting commenced with those present identifying themselves, particularly for the benefit of the interpreter(s).

1.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

The agenda was adopted by consensus.

2.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the minutes of July 17, 2000 was deferred. It was noted that some typographical errors had been identified. These will be conveyed to the Secretary and the revised minutes recirculated with the next agenda package.

3.0 NEW BUSINESS

3.1 AUDIBLE TRAFFIC SIGNALS

Deferred in absence of Barb LeGay.

3.2 SURVEY - DRIVERS WITH DISABILITIES

Circulated some months ago was a memo from Mr. McCusker to Mr. Robar on this subject. Mr. Robar advised that he has worked on this subject with Mr. McCusker and

input about the parking needs of disabled persons was sought in the Canadian Paraplegic Association's magazine.

He will follow-up with Mr. McCusker by e-mail as to whether there has been any response. He will also alert Mr. McCusker of the problems chemically sensitive people encounter in relation to parking, as described below and whether he is interested in including.

Ms. Reynolds raised with the Committee problems chemically sensitive individuals have with parking, i.e. troubles they encounter with indoor parking and having to travel through a building to their destination. While she is in possession of an "accessible parking permit, she does not want to park in spaces identified as accessible for those in wheelchairs.

Mr. Connors sought suggestions of solutions from Ms. Reynolds. She proposed that individuals with chemical sensitivities pay the first hour parking at regular meters and display their "Accessible Parking sign" so as to be permitted to park for the remainder of the time. Mr. Robar reflected that a lot of accessible parking spots are metered as a reflection of equal treatment for all and these individuals have to return to remove their vehicle as required. Mr. Connors noted that the Provincial laws don't allow feeding of meters. Vehicles have to be removed from their parking spots when the time is up.

Reflecting on the above comments, Ms. Reynolds noted that there is no legal way she could attend meetings in this case. When attending HRM meetings, she uses the Grand Parade, but this option isn't available in other instances.

It was suggested by the Chair that the Committee or Ms. Reynolds should contact Mr. McCusker to alert him of these issues, as staff are likely not aware of the needs of the chemically sensitive in relation to parking. Ms. Reynolds will discuss this topic further with the Allergy Association and other user groups to get their input. Mr. Connors felt the suggestions should be fairly site specific. Ms. Reynolds commented on the effect that reductions of waterfront parking has on her.

Ms. Williams felt the Municipality needs more information and education on this matter and a detailed letter identifying the issues would be very beneficial. Any correspondence should be copied to this Committee. By educating staff and councillors, when solutions are presented they will not seem unreasonable. Ms. Reynolds noted that it is a safety issue as well. Perhaps some solutions could be developed for indoor parking run by Halifax Developments.

It was suggested by the Chair that Ms. Reynolds make a presentation to the next meeting on the various aspects, highlighting the difficulties faced by those with chemical sensitivities.

3.3 REQUEST FOR PAINTED CROSSWALK - LOWER WATER STREET AT PRINCE STREET

Circulated with the agenda package was a memo regarding a request by Councillor Read that the Committee investigate and comment on the above. An information report from Mr. Dhillon on the matter raised at the July 4, 2000 Council meeting by Mr. Ruffman was provided. The report explains that the location does not meet HRM's crosswalk criteria, i.e. the painted crosswalk would be located within 200 meters of an existing 'protected' crosswalk.

The members were asked if they had a particular concern with this crosswalk and if so was the concern significant enough to support the request. The members were encouraged to confine their response to Councillor Read's request.

During the lengthy discussion which followed, the following points were made:

- Even though there is no painted crosswalk at this location, it is a crosswalk.
- The roadway is narrow.
- Traffic moves slowly.
- There is no record of an incident or accident at this location.
- No seniors housing in the area.
- Painted crosswalks are really of little value to a driver. Signs are more helpful from a driver's vision standpoint.
- While painted sidewalks provide a level of comfort for the users, they can also result in inattentiveness and accidents.

The following points were cited in favour of a painted crosswalk at this location:

- Near misses are not reported.
- Visitors and even residents of the HRM may not be aware of the existence of crosswalks at all intersections whether painted and/or signed. In instances of very heavy traffic, there are exceptions to the rule and "don't cross signs" are installed.

During debate the question was raised as to whether the elderly and/or disabled individuals would be presented with a problem in making their way to a painted

crosswalk given their potentially limited mobility and possible lack of awareness that unpainted crosswalks can be used.

It was suggested that the item be deferred, as there was no quorum, and Ms. Reynolds desired an opportunity to walk the area to identify any accessible parking spots in the vicinity and observe the use of this intersection. The item was deferred until the October meeting.

3.4 **CORRESPONDENCE FROM COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Circulated in the agenda package was a letter from Betty Thomas, Chair, Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee reflecting on the success of the Tall Ships Event, particularly as it related to accommodations for those with disabilities. The Committee had been alerted to the input of the Committee in this regard and wished to congratulate the members.

The Committee was pleased to see they are having a positive impact and it was recognized.

3.5 **INCLUSIVE TRANSPORTATION PILOT PROGRAM**

Briefing notes dated July 2000 on this subject were circulated in the agenda package. The item was deferred in the absence of Roel Vis, who would be more conversant with the pilot projects underway. Mr. Connors felt the HRM may benefit from such projects as time goes on.

3.6 **INCLUSIVE TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE**

Information pertaining to this conference to be held October 11 and 12th was provided in the agenda package. The location of the conference was questioned. It was believed to be at the Ramada Plaza Hotel, Dartmouth.

Whether there are funds to help with registration was questioned. The cost being approximately \$95.00. In the past, Councillor Blumenthal had provided funding.

It was noted that Roel Vis will be one of the panelists and perhaps he could report back to the Committee.

Ms. Williams suggested the organizers should be contacted to determine if there are any subsidized seats. Reference was made to the deadline for registration being September 15th. Nevertheless, if members were interested in going, they were

encouraged to contact Paul Connors and he will pursue. It was desired that the participant would report back to the Committee.

3.7 **ACCESSIBLE LOW FLOOR BUSES**

Information pertaining to this subject had been provided to the members in a separate mail out in mid August as it was time sensitive. The members had been provided with a Media Advisory and News Release from Metro Transit, ALF Brochure and Policies and Procedures.

It was noted that the service is operating on Routes 3 and 7. The members were canvassed as to whether they had heard any comments about the service. The following were reported:

- A positive response has been received from a resident of Northwood Manor that she now can go shopping without making accessible transportation arrangements.
- Some complaints have been received that due to the limited number of low floor buses, not all routes are served. It was stressed that it is important that Council be made aware of the comments, so increasing the number of low floor buses will be looked on favourably. The Municipality has created the demand and the challenge will be to meet it.

Mr. Robar noted that the Executive Director of the Canadian Paraplegic Association is going to try one of the low floor buses and assess the tie-down system.

Mr. Venus questioned whether the service is yet available in Dartmouth. It was suggested he address this question to Roel Vis.

It was felt that the Committee should write a memo to Council regarding the service, copied to Metro Transit or vice-versa. The drafting was deferred to the next meeting. In the interim, the members were encouraged to use one of these buses and report back on their observations.

Referring to item 4.9 - Tie Downs for Wheelchair Consumers, Mr. Connors advised that Mr. White will be invited to the October meeting.

DIVERSITY WEEK

Ms. Williams reported this is Diversity Week, an internal work place initiative, and the Kick-off took place today. She outlined the events to take place during the week, noting that Tuesday's event, involving an Abilities Challenge, had to be deferred as there were

not enough staff participants. It is planned to hold it as a standalone event in the future.

Reference was made to the initiative being a product of the internal staff committee made up of representatives of the various business units. The Committee was established to raise the profile of diversity within the organization to reflect the Community and Race Relations Policy.

The Committee is trying to create a 'we' approach to diversity, recognizing everyone has an element of diversity not necessarily related to race and gender.

Information can be obtained through accessing the HRM Web site - News Releases.

(Ms. Reynolds left)

4.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

4.1 **2000-2001 WORKPLAN**

The item was deferred to November. Ms. Cale gave her regrets for October.

4.2 **ACCOMMODATIONS GUIDELINES WORKING GROUP**

Deferred in absence of Ms. Brown and Ms. Reynolds.

4.3 **VESTAR**

The members were advised that both Mr. Connors and Ms. Williams have spoken with Mr. LaBrecque, Vestar. Mr. LaBrecque assured them that the concerns of the Committee will be taken into consideration. It was felt he needs to be provided with information, particularly as it relates to those with chemical sensitivities. Mr. Connors noted he will be speaking with Mr. LaBrecque on an on-going basis.

Ms. Williams noted that the business unit has been staffed and perhaps someone could be appointed to act as a staff resource from that unit. This would enable the business unit to have a better understanding of problems faced by those with disabilities. The terms of reference will have to be checked to determine whether this is an option. In the interim, Paul Connors will speak with Mr. LaBrecque to determine if he would support such an initiative. It was recalled that the Chief Administrative Officer would have to make such a staff appointment and Council advised. Issues such as overtime and schedule adjustments would have to be ironed out.

Mr. Venus recalled problems with accessibility associated with the old Dartmouth City Hall, now the **headquarters** of the **HRM School Board**. There was no wheelchair access from Alderney Drive. There had been discussion, prior to amalgamation, of a ramp being installed to the front door. Access is currently gained through the back door, via a zigzag design ramp system incorporated into the concrete and brick steps. He wondered if the Committee could investigate improving access to this building, perhaps through the Province's grant program.

The Committee questioned whether the building fell within the HRM's jurisdiction. Mr. Connors will ask Mr. LaBrecque, who maintains the building inventory.

It was noted that a similar ramp is used in conjunction with the Radisson Hotel. The zigzag pattern is very difficult for large motorized wheelchairs to negotiate.

4.4 CROSSWALK UPDATE - MS. BEAVER'S DEAF DAUGHTER

Ms. MacDonald questioned whether Ms. Williams had anything new to report. Ms. Williams will check her notes and provide an update for the next meeting. Item deferred.

4.5 IDENTIFICATION OF SPEAKERS AND DISTRICTS AT COUNCIL

Ms. MacDonald expressed concern that there were no interpreters during the summer months for Regional Council. Ms. Spears noted that Council did not meet for a month during the summer and for a couple of weeks interpreters could not be provided due to prioritizing.

Mr. Alley and Ms. MacDonald were to work on this topic of survey results. This item will be taken off the agenda and brought forward in January 2001. Mr. Alley and Ms. MacDonald were asked to contact the Chair or the Secretary when they wished the item added to the agenda.

Ms. Williams referred to the changes likely to Council after the Elections. She reported that the Chief Administrative Officer was looking for suggestions of issues to be addressed in orientation sessions. She felt this would be an excellent opportunity to educate people on accessibility matters. Mr. Robar indicated he had some brochures on the subject. The Chair requested that for the next meeting everyone give the subject some thought and bring back some ideas of subjects to be included in the Councillors' **orientation package**. Point form would be the ideal format, with the option to obtain more detailed background information.

If there is a mail out between meetings, Mr. Connors will put in a reminder notice.

Ms. MacDonald requested that she be provided with the minutes earlier, i.e. two weeks before the meeting. It was determined that only the draft minutes could be faxed or e-mailed that early.

4.6 VON TRANSPORTATION

Deferred in absence of Peggy Brown. Ms. Brown was to provide an info sheet.

4.7 PEDWAYS

Mr. Robar has both written and telephoned Halifax Developments, but to date they have not responded. The secretary will try to find an e-mail address for them.

4.8 REGIONAL COUNCIL'S REQUEST - COMMITTEE INVESTIGATE THE MATTER OF CROSSWALKS AND CURB CUTS FOR WHEELCHAIRS TO IDENTIFY ANY THAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Mr. Robar advised that he had contacted Mr. McCusker today for an update. He reflected on it being a massive task. The members were cautioned about assuming responsibility for this work.

4.9 TIE DOWNS FOR WHEELCHAIR CONSUMERS

Refer item 3.7, Accessible Low Floor Buses.

4.10 EVENT GUIDELINES

Deferred.

5.0 ACCESS-A-BUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

No minutes available as no meetings held over the summer months.

Statistics for June attached to agenda package.

6.0 NEXT MEETING

Monday, October 16, 2000.

7.0 **ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting concluded at approximately 5:50 p.m.

P. Connors
Chair

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk

