

**HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY**

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**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**OCTOBER 16, 2000**

**MINUTES/NOTES\* (no quorum)**

**PRESENT:** Mr. Darrell Robar, Acting Chairman  
Mr. Don Mullins  
Ms. Peggy Brown  
Ms. Cynthia Street  
Ms. Betty MacDonald (part)  
Ms. Sally Campbell  
Mr. Donald J. MacDonald (part)  
Ms. Barb LeGay

**ALSO PRESENT:** Ms. Charla Williams, Diversity Coordinator  
Mr. Roel Vis, Schedule Planner, Metro Transit  
Ms. Sandra Spears, Interpreter  
Ms. Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

**REGRETS:** Mr. Bob Venus, Councillor Blumenthal, Ms. Anne Langille, Ms. Maureen Reynolds Ms. Jane Cale and Mr. Paul Connors

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Attendance ..... 3

Marg Hiltz ..... 3

0.1 Identification of Attendees ..... 3

1.0 Approval of Agenda, Additions and Deletions ..... 3

2.0 Approval of Minutes ..... 3

3.0 New Business

    3.1 Audible Traffic Signals ..... 6 - 8

    3.2 Request for Painted Crosswalks - Lower Water Street ..... 8

    3.3 Inclusive Transportation Pilot Program ..... 8

    3.4 Taxi By-law - Sensitivity Training - Joint Letter to Council ..... 8 & 9

4.0 Business Arising from Minutes

    4.1 2000 - 2001 Work Plan - Subcommittee Update ..... 10

    4.2 Accommodations Guidelines Working Group ..... 10

    4.3 Vestar ..... 10

    4.4 Crosswalk Update - Ms. Beaver's Deaf Daughter ..... 10

    4.5 VON Transportation ..... 10

    4.6 Pedways ..... 10

    4.7 Regional Council Request that the Committee Investigate the Matter of  
         Crosswalks and Curb Cuts for Wheelchairs to identify any that could be  
         improved ..... 4 - 6

    4.8 Tie Downs for Wheelchair Consumers ..... 10

    4.9 Event Guidelines ..... 10

    4.10 Survey - Drivers with Disabilities ..... 11

    4.11 Ideas on Accessibility Matters for Councillors' Orientation Package .. 11

    4.12 Presentation - Ms. Reynolds - Parking Issues related to Individuals with  
         Chemical Sensitivities, etc. .... 11

    4.13 Accessible Low Floor Buses - Memo of Support ..... 11

    4.14 Inclusive Transportation Conference ..... 8

5.0 Access-a-Bus Advisory Committee Minutes and Statistics ..... 11

6.0 Next Meeting ..... 11

7.0 Adjournment ..... 12

The meeting was called to order by the Acting Chairman, Darrell Robar in the Training Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Duke Tower at 3:30 p.m.

### **ATTENDANCE**

When the meeting commenced, it was noted that there was not a quorum, for a second meeting in a row. (Later in the meeting, a quorum was obtained for a short duration, but some members had to leave early.)

The Secretary was asked to review the attendance records and identify any members who have not attended the last three meetings. The member(s) are to be written to asking if they are still interested in continuing to participate on the Committee. No objection to this approach was expressed. The matter is timely, as an advertisement for volunteers for HRM's Committees, Commissions and Boards has been placed and new appointments to fill vacancies will be made in November.

It was suggested that the change in meeting time may have presented some members with a problem. In this case, Mr. Robar felt it should be made clear that if one can't make the start of the meeting at 3:30 p.m., they come in whenever they can, i.e. 4:00 p.m. The subject may require revisiting.

### **MARG HILTZ**

As earlier advised a Memorial Service is being held for Marg Hiltz, this Thursday at Bloomfield School. Marg had died in September.

Ms. LeGay questioned if there was any mechanism to have reference to Marg Hiltz's passing and contributions to the community at Regional Council. The Secretary will endeavour to see what can be done.

#### **0.1 IDENTIFICATION OF ATTENDEES**

Present for today's meeting, in addition to the members and support staff, was David McCusker to address item 4.7 and Sandra Spears, an interpreter.

#### **1.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

Nothing was added to the agenda.

#### **2.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of July 2000 could not be approved, as there was no quorum at the commencement of the meeting.

#### 4.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

#### 4.7 **REGIONAL COUNCIL REQUEST THAT THE COMMITTEE INVESTIGATE THE MATTER OF CROSSWALKS AND CURB CUTS FOR WHEELCHAIRS TO IDENTIFY ANY THAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

A request had been made by Councillor Read at the March 21, 2000 Regional Council meeting that the Committee investigate the above noted.

How this request could be handled from the Committee's and staff's perspective was discussed. Mr. Robar reflected that it is difficult for the members to identify problem crosswalks and curb cuts for wheelchairs, as identification would be prejudiced depending on the member's disability.

It was suggested that the community be canvassed to identify problems. The Chair reflected that the Paraplegic Association's newsletter had been used for the purpose of identifying accessible parking spots, but there had been basically no response. As an alternative, Ms. Williams proposed the various disabilities organizations be canvassed and asked for input from their membership. She felt the community is not used to responding to questions from the HRM, but if people realize this will become normal practice, the rate of response will increase. Ms. Williams felt this could be an important educational opportunity on how to contact the Municipality.

Whether or not Council should be contacted via an information report on how the Committee and staff are proceeding with responding to the request was debated. In the event the resources of the HRM Call Centre are required, this will be especially important. Geri Kaiser, General Manager, Shared Services should be contacted. It was felt that this approach would have merit in the event Councillors have been receiving queries.

A number of things related to this project need to be worked out, including logistics.

A discussion followed on whether HRM would facilitate. Mr. McCusker felt his department could play a role, if the Committee could provide a list of organizations. Ms. Williams indicated that there are a couple of lists used in the HRM.

During further discussion of a communications strategy, it was noted that the request for identification of problem curb cuts and crosswalks could also be put on the HRM's web site. Reference was made to Regional Council's break during their regular weekly

session and an opportunity to run a notice on Cable TV. It was also suggested by Mr. McCusker that the Access-a-Bus drivers should be canvassed and a notice posted on Access-a-Buses and ALF buses on routes 3 and 7, for example.

Mr. McCusker recalled that a request had been made by the Committee previously to add funds to the budget for the provision of more curb cuts. He advised that a portion of the approved capital budget has been set aside for this purpose.

Whether audible traffic signals (item 3.1) should be included in the survey was discussed. Mr. McCusker indicated that HRM is still in the process of evaluating the two technologies. He indicated that this will be a big decision, given it is potentially a fairly large investment. Ms. LeGay noted that the users have conducted some evaluations and she identified concerns they have re the new technology.

The Chair indicated that he has been alerted to the problems associated with reaching the buttons to activate signals to turn overhead lights on. The posts can't be reached, as the area up to the posts is not concreted, for example. Perhaps the disabled community should be canvassed as to where these trouble signals are located. Mr. McCusker acknowledged such input is valuable to staff, so it is taken into consideration when new signals are installed. If problem signals are identified, staff can endeavour to install a separate small pole in a more accessible area.

Mr. McCusker also noted that there is no inventory or capability within the HRM to develop one. Later in the meeting, this subject was again raised by Cynthia Street. She felt that a inventory must be kept for at least maintenance purposes. Mr. McCusker indicated that when problems arise at specific locations, they are simply addressed. Installations are based on specific complaints and need. The only unit that had an inventory, prior to amalgamation, was the City of Dartmouth, but it is now out of date. Ms. Street proposed Purchase Orders be used to develop a data base. Ms. Williams confirmed that with the SAP system now in use, this is an option on a go forward basis. It was also felt important that when issues arise, there is a way to maintain that information.

Whether the audible traffic signal item should be included in the survey list was questioned.

Reference was made to complaints that the new signals' blue lights are too bright.

The Secretary noted that when Ms. Langille gave her regrets due to illness, she expressed disappointment that she could not be present for the discussion of crosswalks. She and Ms. LeGay had discussed problems encountered by the blind

and visually impaired some months ago, particularly related to those accompanied by 'seeing eye' dogs. Her concerns were deferred to the next meeting.

**MOVED BY Peggy Brown and seconded by Betty MacDonald that the Committee request HRM Traffic Services to facilitate a notice to generate input on curbcuts, crosswalks, including locations where it is difficult for the disabled to access the signal button and accessible parking areas to be undersigned by the Committee's Chair. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. McCusker will draft a notice and send to Mr. Robar for input.

### 3.0 NEW BUSINESS

#### 3.1 AUDIBLE TRAFFIC SIGNALS

Ms. LeGay brought the committee up to date on the whole subject of Audible Traffic Signals (item 3.1). She referred to the presentation made to Council two years ago regarding the fact that existing audible traffic signals are not installed properly; any new signaled intersections should incorporate audible signals and retrofitting of existing signals is required. She referred to Dr. van Hutton of Mt. Saint Vincent University suggestion that LED traffic signals be tested. These signals are activated through communication with a handheld box. The box was designed to either emit a beep or vibrate in the hand. Ms. LeGay explained why it is felt that the device is somewhat unreliable in some situations, i.e. it has to angled correctly and a pedestrian or vehicle passing in front of the user can result in a loss of signal. The visually impaired would like to test other devices because of these concerns. There is also concern about who will maintain the units and the situation newcomers to the Municipality will face if they don't have an activating device.

She expressed concern that while money has been set aside in the budget for these installations, it appears the matter has come to a standstill. She wondered if there was anything the Committee could do to expedite the matter, ie. make its endorsement known to Council or a letter to the Mayor.

Mr. McCusker indicated that it is the intention not to invest anymore money into the audible traffic signals until a decision is made on the best option. The input from those who use the signals is an important part of the equation, whether HRM proceeds with

installing LED or audible signals. He referred to concerns from residents regarding nuisance noise emanating from existing audible signals. If the LED signals could be made to work to users' satisfaction they would provide an alternative. If this can't be done and LED signals are not functional, HRM is prepared to make an investment in additional audible ones. If there are other technologies available, HRM would be prepared to investigate them as well.

He assured the members that money has been set aside for their installation and if not used in this budget year can be carried forward, as long as the project is ongoing. The budget item also includes funding for other aspects of pedestrian safety and accessibility, including curb cuts, crosswalks and signage. \$30,000 was budgeted for the year 2000-2001 and \$60,000 for next year. He felt there would be merit in the Committee writing Council identifying this item and indicating the Committee's desire that funding be continued.

Reference was made to the scope of elements in this budget item and the benefits to the disabled community. Ms. Williams reflected that when the survey results are received, other priorities may be identified and priorities may shift. Again the subject of whether the subject of audible traffic signals should be added to the survey was raised. Ms. Williams and Roel Vis will meet with a representative(s) of Mr. McCusker's department to discuss any other ways to solicit comment. It was suggested that the survey be included with, for example, the water bill. The regular municipal announcements were not felt to be an option, due to cost. Mr. McCusker noted that the capital budget, earlier referred to, includes a category for implementation. Whether there was merit in spending a portion of the budget for hiring a consultant or communications company to do a needs assessment professionally was discussed. It was recognized that the down side is that every dollar spent in this fashion, means fewer improvements on the street. Ms. Williams referred to the role Shared Services could play. While they charge a fee for service, the advantage would be that more knowledge would be developed internally. Shared Services have communications and marketing people on staff and likely could provide the best rate for the service.

The Chair felt the project should be started off slow, ie. survey through Access-a-Bus, CNIB, CPA, etc. Some of the issues the Committee is looking at may be addressed through the Regional Transportation Study, as it involved pedestrian movement. Mr. McCusker confirmed this to be the case, but while there is some reference to pedestrian movement, it does not go into specifics.

Ms. Williams referred to the role the Corporate Library could play in research, as well. She encouraged the members to take back the issues discussed to their communities.

Another avenue Mr. Vis felt should be explored was the HRM newsletter. The concerns

could be addressed thus raising awareness among staff.

Concern was expressed with the lack of material on the Committee's web site. The biographies have yet to be added. The opportune time to make these additions will be later this fall, when the new appointments to the Committee are made, Ms. Williams proposed.

The use of the web site for conducting the above noted survey was suggested by Mr. Vis. Reference was made to a Communications Committee and Mr. Vis liaising with them.

It was concluded that the Committee would write a letter to Regional Council endorsing the initiative of setting aside funds for audible traffic signals. Mr. Robar will draft.

### **3.2 REQUEST FOR PAINTED CROSSWALK - LOWER WATER STREET**

Deferred in absence of Paul Connors and Maureen Reynolds. Ms. LeGay reflected on her observations of Lower Water Street and the lack of consistency in cars observing the crosswalks.

### **3.3 INCLUSIVE TRANSPORTATION PILOT PROGRAM &** **4.14 INCLUSIVE TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE**

Ms. Brown reported that she had attended the first day of the conference. There were seven (7) speakers that day from various countries and provinces.

The second day Roel Vis gave a presentation which was well received. Work shops followed. Ms. Brown attended the Accessible Taxis Workshop. Another Workshop had dealt with sensitivity issues. Other topics were addressed in the afternoon.

Mr. Vis referred to the pilot projects being conducted in Truro, Antigonish, Guysborough and Yarmouth. The purpose of the conference was to get feedback from existing transportation system worldwide on the direction they are taking. It will be interesting to see how these pilot programs in Nova Scotia develop and whether they will be continued.

He has some handouts that he intends to distribute to both the Access-a-Bus Advisory Committee and the Committee.

In response to a query from the Chair, Mr. Vis noted that the problems of cities such as Edmonton and Toronto are similar to this Municipality's, just larger in scale. It was

noted that Holland, which is similar in size to Nova Scotia, has one call center servicing the whole country. The technology just does not exist here for such a system to be feasible. Major changes in technology are anticipated in the next 5 to 10 years.

### 3.4 TAXI BY-LAW - SENSITIVITY TRAINING - JOINT LETTER TO COUNCIL

Circulated with the agenda package was a draft letter re By-Law T-109 respecting the Regulation of Taxis and Limousines.

During the review concern was expressed regarding the following:

- Who will bear the cost of training the drivers? There might be a backlash in the industry if the drivers were expected to absorb this additional cost. It was noted that they are now required to pay for a Criminal Records check and this will be another cost for drivers to absorb. Concern was expressed about being part of a backlash from the industry. Some drivers might refuse a call from a disabled customer. Mr. Vis noted this is already happening.

Mr. Vis noted that the Access-a-Bus Advisory Committee did not discuss cost. They felt that not only new drivers would benefit from sensitivity training but existing drivers as well. There is an identified need.

Ms. Campbell suggested the cost of obtaining a Taxi Licence be reduced if the driver takes sensitivity training.

- What form would the training take? Information provided in a letter or flyer, a one hour session, etc.? Ms. LeGay felt one should not be too specific about training. It was recognized that for the training to be effective there has to be more involved than a written communication and an hour class. Mr. Vis did not think the Committee should worry about cost.
- There are a number of taxi cab drivers not physically able to be of assistance. There is no physical requirement to obtain a Taxi License. As in the case of those with allergies to 'seeing eye' dogs, it was suggested that these individuals would identify themselves as drivers with a disability, supported by a doctor's certificate.

Referring to the actual wording of the draft, it was decided that the reference to "sensitivity training in the proper care and handling of all mobility devices....should be expanded to "matters related to providing service to persons with disabilities including, but not limited to, the proper care and handling of all mobility devices...".

It was suggested that there might be value in the Chairs of this Committee and the Access-a-Bus Advisory Committee attending a Taxi Commission meeting or holding a special joint meeting.

It was believed that the by-law was going to third reading. No one knew when it was on Council's agenda. Concern was expressed that third reading might take place before the correspondence reaches Council. The Secretary will check into the schedule.

Since there was no quorum, a motion to send the amended correspondence was not possible. Those present were canvassed on whether they agreed with the proposed letter, as amended, being sent to the Mayor and Regional Council. Ms. Street gave her support, but stated she felt training should be free. Don Mullins, Sally Campbell, Peggy Brown, Barb LeGay, together with Darrell Robar, supported sending the letter. Mr. Vis will revise the draft and send it to Paul Connors, who can conduct a telephone poll of members not present.

4.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES (cont'd)**

4.1 **2000 - 2001 WORK PLAN - SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE**

Deferred to November in absence of Ms. Cale.

4.2 **ACCOMMODATIONS GUIDELINES WORKING GROUP**

Deferred as Ms. Reynolds not present.

4.3 **VESTAR**

Update from Mr. Connors on contact with Mr. Labrecque re appointment of staff resource and whether the School Board Building, Alderney Drive falls under Vestar's jurisdiction, etc. deferred because of Mr. Connors absence.

4.4 **CROSSWALK UPDATE - MS. BEAVER'S DEAF DAUGHTER**

Ms. Williams asked that it be deferred.

4.5 **VON TRANSPORTATION**

Ms. Brown followed up and determined the VON was just looking for drivers.

4.6 **PEDWAYS**

Mr. Robar, as previously indicated, has not had any response from Sobeys to his calls or letters. He tried their e-mail address to no avail. He will try again.

#### 4.8 **TIE DOWN FOR WHEELCHAIR CONSUMERS**

In the absence of Mr. Connors there was no word on whether Mr. Dave White, Manager N.S. Utility Review Board would be attending a meeting.

#### 4.9 **EVENT GUIDELINES**

It was recalled that at the May meeting, Andrew Cox and Mike Gillett, HRM Event Coordinators were in attendance to describe to the members initiatives taken to accommodate those with disabilities during the Tall Ships 2000 Event. On this occasion it was suggested that in the autumn, it would be worthwhile for Committee representatives to sit down with these individual to contribute to the Guidelines outside event organizers are given. Organizers entering the process would be made aware of what is expected of them in terms of accommodations for persons with disabilities. Ms. Williams will contact Mr. Cox for the purposes of having a preliminary discussion.

#### 4.10 **SURVEY - DRIVERS WITH DISABILITIES**

As previously mentioned in relation to item 4.7, the survey conducted through the Canadian Paraplegic Association's publication had little or no response.

#### 4.11 **IDEAS ON ACCESSIBILITY MATTERS FOR COUNCILLORS' ORIENTATION PACKAGE**

The members, at the previous meeting, were encouraged by Ms. Williams to bring forward ideas for incorporation in the Orientation Package. Ms. Cale had submitted an article entitled "Communicating With and About People with Disabilities", President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. This item was circulated in the agenda package.

Mr. Robar had two brochures and a sheet which he submitted to Ms. Williams. Information contained in the above might be useful for the package. It was felt that these submissions were a good start, but members were encouraged to pass along other issues they feel the Councillors should be informed of for the next orientation.

Ms. Brown reflected on her observations of the last Council meeting. Names are given, not districts. Ms. Williams felt constant reminders are required to instill this practice.

#### 4.12 **PRESENTATION - MS. REYNOLDS - PARKING ISSUES RELATED TO**

**INDIVIDUALS WITH CHEMICAL SENSITIVITIES, ETC.**

Deferred in Ms. Reynolds' absence.

**4.13 ACCESSIBLE LOW FLOOR BUSES - MEMO OF SUPPORT**

A number of favourable comments regarding the Accessible Low Floor Buses were referred to. It was felt that a letter should be written to Regional Council before the budget process commences, encouraging them to continue purchasing these vehicles. The letter would essentially indicate that Committee members have heard positive comments from members of the disability's community regarding the implementation of the ALF buses. The Committee would like to congratulate Metro Transit's progressive approach to accessible transportation and encourage Council to continue to support this type of initiative.

**5.0 ACCESS-A-BUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES & STATISTICS**

None available.

**6.0 NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 20, 2000.

**7.0 ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting concluded at 6:00 p.m.

Paul Connors  
Chair

Lynne Le Boutillier  
Assistant Municipal Clerk