

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

MINUTES

JANUARY 15, 2001

PRESENT: Mr. Paul Connors, Chair
Mr. Darrell Robar
Ms. Barb LeGay
Ms. Ann Langille
Ms. Peggy Brown
Ms. Sally Campbell
Mr. Bob Venus
Ms. Cynthia Street
Ms. Maureen Reynolds
Mr. Don Mullins
Councillor Sarto
Deputy Mayor Blumenthal

ALSO PRESENT: Ms. Charla Williams, Diversity Coordinator
Mr. Roel Vis, Metro Transit Scheduler
Ms. Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

REGRETS: Ms. Betty MacDonald and Ms. Jane Cale (Ms. Brown advised that a regular attendee, Elsie Charlotte, had undergone surgery and will be recuperating for seven weeks)

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0.1 **IDENTIFICATION OF ATTENDEES**

The Chair introduced Councillor Sarto, a new member, recently appointed by Regional Council to the Committee.

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

Item 3.4 was added under New Business - Bus Passes for the Blind.

Only items 3.1, Braille Printer, 3.4, Bus Passes for the Blind and 4.7, Tie Downs for Wheelchair Consumers were dealt with today. The balance of the agenda was deferred to February.

The Chair noted that Mr. Labrecque will be able to attend the February meeting regarding item 4.3 - Vestar.

Ms. Reynolds was in possession of some information on less toxic cleaners which she would like HRM to consider using. The Chair suggested that the information should be provided to Procurement and Facilities Management for evaluation.

2.0 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The November 20, 2000 minutes were adopted, as circulated.

3.0 **NEW BUSINESS**

3.1 **BRaille PRINTER - UPDATE**

Ms. Dorothy Cartlidge, Production Manager, Shared Services, Marketing and Design Services was introduced to the members. The Committee was advised that the first set of minutes was produced on HRM's braille printer this week and provided to Peggy Brown for evaluation.

Several problems with this first attempt were identified by Ms. Brown. For example, Grade I braille had been provided, while for a document of this length, Grade II braille with be preferable, due to the contractions used. It was explained that Grade I braille is used by individuals learning to use braille or for short items. The braille was also double spaced. Experienced readers would prefer single spacing. Some problems were identified in the list of attendees and in spellings within the text.

Ms. LeGay questioned Ms. Cartlidge on whether Duxsbury software was being used. She felt that the problems encountered could be rectified by settings being changed in the

Duxsbury software package and the document being sent to print via this software versus the Work Perfect software. Both Ms. Brown and Ms. LeGay offered to help sort out these issues.

It was suggested to Ms. Cartlidge that it would be worthwhile to braille a recent letter from Metro Transit regarding bus passes and also the flyer containing emergency numbers.

There is some question whether the equipment will be able to print business cards.

Councillor Blumenthal recalled that one of the arguments given when persuading Council to purchase the printer was that revenue could be generated from the sale of the service. Until staff is familiar with its operation, it was felt that having the equipment available to produce documents on demand, should not be advertised.

It was suggested that Ms. Cartlidge might wish to contact APSEA (Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority) or the CNIB if further assistance is required.

In closing, Mr. Connors recognized the efforts of Councillor Blumenthal in championing the acquisition of the equipment at Regional Council.

3.2 **REQUEST BY MR. MACDONALD FOR A LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Deferred.

3.3 **HRM 20/20**

For information. Ms. Langille had questioned whether the final document had included the Committee's input.

3.4 **BUS PASSES FOR THE BLIND**

Deputy Mayor Blumenthal noted that Councillor Hetherington had requested that he raise this matter with the Committee. Apparently for a longtime Metro Transit has provided free bus passes to the CNIB and consideration is being given to stopping the practice.

Mr. Vis noted that the CNIB has been advised that the free bus passes can still be used until further notice. Mr. Vis had understood that Councillor Hetherington was going to make a request, through Regional Council, that staff look into the situation.

A lengthy discussion followed on the appropriateness of providing free bus passes to the blind, when individuals with other disabilities are not given them. It was argued that everyone should be treated fairly.

During the discussion, it was noted that the bus passes are administered by the CNIB. Of the approximately 450 bus passes issued, about thirty (30) are used on a regular basis. This being the case, Ms. LeGay did not feel much money would be saved by Metro Transit if the practice was stopped. Mr. Vis noted a recent survey of transit and ferry passengers indicated there are twenty-seven (27) daily users, seven days a week on both systems.

Ms. LeGay noted that were she to pay full fare as a blind person, she would want the bus service to be more accessible, i.e. bus drivers to announce each stop, etc.

It was noted that Access-a-Bus does not honor the passes.

It was suggested by Deputy Mayor Blumenthal that someone should discuss the situation with Councillor Hetherington. The Chair suggested Mr. Vis, however Mr. Vis noted he had already discussed the matter with the Councillor and was of the understanding he would recommend to Regional Council that they request Metro Transit to continue the practice. Mr. Vis felt Councillor Hetherington wished to get a sense of how the Committee felt regarding this issue. Mr. Vis stressed it is not a Transit issue, but a Municipal issue.

It was argued that it was not so much a matter of taking away a privilege, but that all disabled persons are looking for equal treatment.

Ms. Williams stressed the need to look at the issue holistically. She questioned how do you provide services equitably and fairly. She expressed concern for continuing a practice, on the basis of what has happened historically. She would prefer to see an argument made for continuing or instituting a practice for the right reasons.

It was concluded that it would be preferable for Councillor Hetherington to bring the matter up at Regional Council. Direction would likely be given to raise the matter with the Committee and the Access-a-Bus Advisory Committee and staff to research, through the CNIB, for example. It may result in a needs assessment exercise.

4.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

As earlier mentioned under item 1.0, the balance of the agenda was deferred.

However, item 4.1 Work Plan was raised by the Secretary with the Chair. An Information Report on the 2001-2002 Work Plan was proposed. The draft was briefly reviewed by the Chair and the Secretary directed to contact Ms. Cale for further input.

Also item 4.9 - Accessible Low Floor Buses - Memo to Council was held following Mr. White's presentation under item 4.7.

Item 4.10 - Taxi By-law - Sensitivity Training - Joint Letter was discussed by Mr. Vis and the Chair after the meeting.

4.7 TIE DOWNS FOR WHEELCHAIR CONSUMERS

Mr. David White, Manager, Motor Carrier Administration, N.S. Utility Review Board, had been invited to this month's meeting to discuss the above noted subject. Mr. White noted that he works very closely with Metro Transit and Access-a-Bus.

He discussed with the Committee D409 and CSA standards and their relationship. A meeting with CSA is planned for later this month, which may result in new requirements for transit. He noted the concerns of Metro Transit regarding the issue of tie downs for wheelchairs which are required under the D409 standards. Reference was made to ongoing research on passive restraints.

In response to a question from Deputy Mayor Blumenthal, Mr. White understood that D409 has been only adopted for use in Ontario and Nova Scotia.

Deputy Mayor Blumenthal questioned Mr. White on whether he felt pursuing the acquisition of all low floor buses was the right direction. Mr. White was confident this was the right course for the future. Mr. Vis noted that this is the directive that Regional Council has given Metro Transit.

A discussion followed on whether scooters will be able to be accommodated. Mr. White advised that scooters can be retrofitted and can be secured. He noted that CSA has also been working with wheelchair manufacturers to design wheelchairs so they can be quickly attached and detached. The wheelchairs and scooters of the future will come with quick snap connectors.

Ms. Reynolds posed a question to Mr. White regarding whether school buses will eventually be required to have seat belts. Mr. White described in detail the construction of school buses which makes seat belts not necessary.

Ms. Williams felt it would be desirable if someone could coordinate what adjustments are required to wheelchairs and scooters to adopt them to tie down systems. She also referred to problems with accessible transportation in general and used as an example someone arriving at Halifax International Airport and seeking transportation to Halifax. Initiatives in this area being taken by the Province were outlined by Mr. White. He noted that one of the biggest hurdles relates to the additional cost of making a vehicle accessible.

Mr. White referring to the new Halifax International Airport Authority suggested that they be approached to include accessible transit in their next contract.

Reference was made to the Dial-a-Ride and the fact that Metro Transit is not part of that system.

Ms. Reynolds questioned whether consideration has been given to the location of bus exhausts, which can prove a problem for those with chemical sensitivities. Mr. White indicated that this has been taken into account, but has not been perfected.

In closing, Mr. White indicated should he be needed, he'd be pleased to attend another meeting.

PARKING SPACES FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Reynolds had received a couple of e-mails identifying locations where people felt parking spaces were needed. She provided to Mr. Connors for forwarding to Mr. McCusker.

5.0 ACCESS-A-BUS COMMITTEE MINUTES

The approved October minutes will be provided with the February agenda package.

While the Access-a-Bus statistics for August and September were provided in the package, the October and November statistics will be circulated in the next agenda package.

6.0 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 19, 2001.

7.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:50 p.m.

Paul D. Connors
Chair

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk