

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES April 30, 2001

PRESENT: Paul Connors, Chair
Peggy Brown
Cynthia Street
Bob Venus
Anne Langille
Jane Cale
Elsie Cholette
Ken Hines
Sally Campbell
Mary Anne Jones
Mary MacDonald
Barb LeGay
Darrell Robar
Deputy Mayor Blumenthal
Betty MacDonald

REGRETS: Don Mullins
Councillor Sarto
Maureen Reynolds
Charla Williams
Roel Vis

STAFF: Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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0.1 **IDENTIFICATION OF ATTENDEES AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS**

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 3:40 p.m. with introduction of members.

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

The following items were added to the agenda.

Item 3.2 - Low Floor Bus Service Update

Ms. Brown requested that an Accessible Transportation Issue be added to the agenda, but Mr. Robar noted that it had been decided that such matters would be dealt with by the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee.

Ms. Brown requested an update be provided on Bus Passes for the blind. Covered under Item 5, Status Sheet.

The agenda was adopted, as amended. Later in the meeting, with Ms. Langille's arrival, Item 4.7 - Jaywalking was added.

2.0 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the March 19, 2001 meeting were adopted, as circulated, on motion of Ms. Brown and Ms. Cale.

Peggy Brown was queried on the quality of the minutes being provided in braille. She noted one minor problem, a # sign appears at the top of the pages but not the actual numbers.

3.0 **NEW BUSINESS**

3.1 **BROCHURE - CRIME PREVENTION AND PERSONAL SAFETY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Included in the agenda package was a brochure entitled "Your Guide to Safety and Security" from the City of Calgary. Reference was made to an e-mail from the Halifax Regional Police noting they are in the process of putting together a crime prevention and personal safety brochure for persons with disabilities.

Ms. Brown noted that this brochure has also been dealt with at the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee.

The members felt the brochure to be a good one and it was decided that a letter should be written to the Police Commission endorsing the initiative, with a copy to the Mayor and Council. The Committee would also like to see the draft brochure before it is finalized.

Ms. MacDonald reported to the Committee on a situation she experienced in September 2000, when the Police Service refused to engage an interpreter to communicate with her. They had expected her daughter to fulfill this role. Ms. MacDonald reflected that this posed an embarrassing situation. She felt she should be entitled to have direct communication. It was suggested that individuals need to be trained in the Police and Fire Services in sign language. Whether or not they have trained interpreters was not known. Ms. MacDonald was assured by the Chair that the Committee will forward her concerns.

Ms. Brown related an incident where money was stolen from her wallet and she did not know where else to call but 911. Ms. Cale referred to a list of frequently called numbers her Neighbourhood Watch has compiled. She will provide and ask to have it brailled.

Ms. Jones questioned whether this brochure would be available on tape. While provisions have been made for the provision of materials in electronic form and braille, whether material on tape was requested was in question. Reference will be made in the letter to the Police Commission of providing the brochure in all formats, including on tape.

Ms. Jones referred to St. Mary's providing a taping service for their students. It was also noted that the CNIB does similar work. Ms. Jones offered to identify a volunteer to take on this task. The Chair cautioned that it is not for the Committee members to take on such work, but refer such matters to staff.

3.2 LOW FLOOR BUS SERVICE UPDATE

Circulated at the meeting was a letter dated April 26, 2001 to the Chair from Ms. Newcombe, Chair, Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee. The report dated February 9, 2001 from Metro Transit provided an update on Low Floor Bus Wheelchair Service as requested by the ATAC at its January meeting. Reference was made to the suspension of service to persons in wheelchairs/scooters from January 22 to February 22, 2001 due to the sidewalks along routes 3 & 7 being impassible. The report was being forwarded to the Committee for discussion and possible recommendation to Council.

A discussion followed on the need for the Municipality to be better prepared for snow removal in the future, if they wish to incorporate low floor buses into the Transit Service. Issues related to curb cuts and accessible bus stops also have to be considered. It was noted that such service is provided in other Canadian cities which experience heavy snowfalls. Roel Vis will be asked to advise on how other Canadian cities handle snow events.

Deputy Mayor Blumenthal noted that the first priority after a snow storm is clearing of the roads. In the former City of Halifax, sidewalks must be cleared by abutters within twelve (12) hours of a storm. He noted that a lot of the snow and ice removal work is contracted out. Perhaps not enough contracts were let.

Whether or not the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee has responded was not known. If they had, it was suggested the Committee may simply wish to endorse their response. The Chair will call Ms. Newcombe.

4.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

4.1 **CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS**

The Chair advised he will be discussing this matter with Don Maling, Corporate Safety Coordinator Wednesday. He will express the need for better inspection of what contractors are doing to make sure accessibility is taken into account around construction sites. He will provide an update for next month's meeting.

4.2 **HOME CARE WORKERS - PARKING TICKETS**

An exchange of e-mails related to the subject of home care workers receiving parking tickets during snow removal operations was circulated to the members.

During the review of this matter, it was noted that provincial legislation is involved not municipal legislation. Reference was made to the only vehicles exempted being emergency vehicles, i.e. police, fire and ambulances.

During the following discussion, it was noted that in some situations home care can be an emergency. It was suggested that it may be the home care agencies themselves who might wish to approach the Province to expand their definition.

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

It was recalled that the matter was brought to the Committee by former Councillor Graham Read. The Chair is meeting Mr. McCusker, Traffic Authority this Wednesday. He will also address item 4.5 - Crosswalks (someone to address the Committee about how the location of painted crosswalks is chosen). This item was raised by Ms. Langille. The Chair will ask for an analyst to attend the May meeting.

4.4 **FEDERAL DISABILITY COMMISSIONER PROPOSAL**

Deferred in absence of Ms. Williams. The Chair will speak with Ms. Williams.

4.5 **CROSSWALKS**

See item 4.3.

4.6 **SIGNING AT COUNCIL**

Mr. Venus reported on his observation of signing of Regional Council meetings. In addition to signing being provided for only two hours, there was no interpreter for January 23, February 6 (after the first two hours), March 27, April 10 and April 23rd. It was acknowledged by Betty MacDonald that it can be difficult for interpreters to work more than two hours and they are difficult to find. Pairs of interpreters would be required for extended periods.

The Chair felt that rather than only two hours of a Regional Council meeting being signed, arrangements should be made for a continuation if the meetings go past 8:00 p.m. Whether Vi Carmichael, Municipal Clerk or Geri Kaiser, Director, Shared Services should be contacted was discussed.

Concern was also expressed that the names of Councillors and the Districts they represent is not being provided routinely. Deputy Mayor Blumenthal noted that the matter was raised with Mayor Kelly, three weeks ago. It was decided that the first and second times a Councillor speaks their name and district should be announced. No reference would be subsequently made at the meeting.

There was consensus that the names and districts should be identified every time. It was concluded that the Chair should correspond with the Mayor.

4.7 **JAYWALKING**

Ms. Langille requested what the definition of Jaywalking and fines associated with being caught Jaywalking are. The Secretary had made a query to Sgt. Melvin, responsible for Summary Offence Tickets, but he had not returned her call in time for the meeting.

The Chair felt that J Walking pertains to crossing a street outside a crosswalk area. He reiterated that legal crosswalks exists at every intersection, whether painted or not unless there is signage prohibiting. Painted crosswalks and installation of lights depend on volume of pedestrian use, safety factors and visibility.

Several questions were posed regarding specific situations. The members were encouraged

to make note of these and raise them with the Traffic Analyst at the next meeting.

Ms. Campbell raised a concern regarding snow removal, curb cuts and accessible parking in the area of Spring Garden Road and Robie Street. It was noted that Dave McCusker, 490-6696 should be contacted directly regarding designation of Accessible Parking spaces and problems re snow and ice removal should be directed to Public Works. It was acknowledged that staff has responded very well in past to such matters being brought to their attention. The Chair will raise the subject of inadequate curb cuts with Don Maling.

5.0 **STATUS SHEET**

The first version of a Status Sheet was circulated at the meeting. The emphasis is on various activities in the Work Plan.

As suspected, the traditional status sheet used by HRM which uses columns can't be translated into braille. A more standard word processing format will be used in future.

Besides bringing the Work Plan to each meeting, the members were encouraged to review the Status Sheet in depth each month. In order to direct members attention to activities for which they are responsible, names will be highlighted on the status sheet. For braille purposes the use of italics was felt preferable.

During review of the Status Sheet the following items were discussed.

Braille Printer:

Ms. LeGay has discussed with Dorothy Cartledge the advantages of upgrading the current equipment used for braille, so that the braille can be double sided. This would not only save in paper but reduce the bulk of the documents and mailing costs. Whether the supplier of the equipment would be prepared to exchange the HRM equipment for an upgrade isn't known.

Barb LeGay volunteered to draft a letter to Geri Kaiser, Director, Shared Services. She noted that she did not feel the marketing of this service should be used to warrant the upgrade. She stressed that providing braille internally is one thing, providing braille commercially is another. She did not think HRM would want to get involved in what would be required to maintain this standard.

Bus Passes For Blind - Request From Regional Council:

It was recalled that this item had been forwarded to the Committee by Council. It was noted that the provisions of free Metro Transit bus passes for the blind had been extended to the end of June.

A subcommittee consisting of the Chair, Roel Vis and Charla Williams has been meeting to draft a policy based on their research for Council. The Chair noted it is a very complicated matter.

Ms. Brown needed an update for a meeting tomorrow night. The Chair could not provide Ms. Brown with any conclusions, as the sub-committee is still only gathering information. He emphasized that it is not an easy process as there are so many variables and conditions.

Ms. Jones enquired whether the sub-committee is accepting any suggestions. The Chair indicated they are from individuals or groups in writing. She left a suggestion with the Secretary for distribution to the members.

It was recalled by Ms. Brown that a facilitated meeting was proposed. The Chair assured her one would be held.

Accommodation Guidelines Working Group:

Ms. Brown reported to date they have not met. The Chair felt that for the benefit of the new members this item should be added to the May agenda, so there is a clear understanding of what Accommodation Guidelines are. These guidelines don't relate to housing, for instance, but making all things accessible.

Before the agenda is prepared for upcoming meetings, the members were encouraged to review the Status Sheet and if they have anything to report, advise the Secretary so she can add under Business Arising.

6.0 ACCESSIBLE - TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Approved minutes of the January and February meetings were circulated in the agenda package. The March minutes were circulated at the meeting.

STATISTICS - ACCESS-A-BUS - JANUARY 2001

Not yet available.

7.0 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting, which normally falls on the third Monday of the month, had to be rescheduled as May 21st is Victoria Day.

It was decided to hold the meeting, the fourth Monday of the month, May 28th. Ms. Brown indicated she had a conflict and gave her regrets, as did Elsie Cholette.

Ms. MacDonald requested that an item be added to next month's agenda re Crosswalks - Deaf Children. She referred to an instance where there is a deaf child attending a school where there is no crosswalk or crossing guard. Rather than an agenda item, Ms. MacDonald was directed to contact Mr. McCusker whose jurisdiction covers signage for the deaf and painting of crosswalks. The issue of crossing guards is a policing matter. Mr. McCusker might be able to refer Ms. MacDonald to individual in the Police Service responsible for crossing guards.

8.0 **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk