

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES May 28, 2001

PRESENT: Paul Connors, Chair
Peggy Brown
Cynthia Street
Bob Venus
Anne Langille
Jane Cale
Sally Campbell
Mary MacDonald
Betty MacDonald
Councillor Sarto

REGRETS: Don Mullins
Deputy Mayor Blumenthal
Maureen Reynolds
Darrell Robar
Ken Hines
Barb LeGay
Mary Anne Jones
Roel Vis

STAFF: Charla Williams, Diversity Program Coordinator
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 3.3 - Meeting Time

Item 3.4 - Rails to Trails - Hubbards Area

To accommodate Taso Koutroulakis present for item 4.2, this item was moved up on the agenda.

The agenda was adopted, as amended.

2.0 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

An error was noted on page 9 of the April 30, 2001 minutes under item 7.0, first sentence. Change May 28th to May 21st.

The minutes, as amended, were adopted on motion of Ms. Cale and Ms. Brown.

4.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

4.2 **TRAFFIC REPRESENTATIVE: IDENTIFICATION OF CROSSWALKS AND CURB CUTS FOR WHEELCHAIRS REQUIRING IMPROVEMENT/HOW THE LOCATION OF PAINTED SIDEWALKS IS DETERMINED/JAYWALKING (FINES & DEFINITION)**

Mr. Taso Koutroulakis, Supervisor Traffic Services, was introduced to the members by the Chair.

Mr. Koutroulakis circulated to the members information on marked crosswalks, which referred to the criteria used in selection, i.e. traffic and pedestrian volumes, spacing, etc. He noted that the material is posted on the HRM Website, under Traffic Control Practices and Warrants.

Subjects raised with Mr. Koutroulakis were as follows:

- C Difficulties those in wheelchairs and persons with vision problems have with construction sites.
Mr. Koutroulakis recalled this subject being discussed in the Design Department, but

he was not aware of the outcome. He recalled it was felt that there was a need to have something closer to the ground, than provided by traditional barricades, which someone with a cane can hit. He will find out the outcome of the discussions. The Chair noted that he had discussed this matter with Mr. Maling also and requested that Mr. Koutroulakis follow-up with him.

Reference was made to the difficulty of negotiating an area on South Street where an old service station has been torn down. Mr. Koutroulakis noted that some aspects would be controlled by development agreements.

Reference was made by Ms. Williams to plans the Community and Race Relations Policy Implementation Committee are making for Workplace Diversity Week, Sept. 16 to 22. She understood they plan to focus an event on disability issues, such as access to sidewalks in the area of construction sites. An associated problem solving session between the Traffic Division staff and EMT was envisaged.

C Manhole Covers

Peggy Brown described problems individuals have with manhole covers. The Chair indicated he would mention these to Mr. Maling and perhaps Mr. Koutroulakis could pass along as well.

C Curbcuts (particularly Spring Garden Road, west side of Library) - It was identified that this curbcut is too steep. The Chair indicated that he had spoken to Mr. Maling about curbcuts in general, but will reiterate the steepness of this one causing a problem.

C Sidewalk Construction

Concern was expressed that when sidewalk construction is undertaken, the areas are left as is overnight. To make these areas more passable and less of a hazard, it was suggested that plywood be laid over them during the night. Examples cited were Spring Garden Road and adjoining streets.

C Sidewalk Conditions

Reference was made to the fact that several sections of sidewalks in the southend are cracked and jutting up, resulting in an obstacle course for individuals in wheelchairs. Examples given were in front the Law Library, University Avenue and a stretch on Morris Street. Mr. Koutroulakis suggested that anytime such situations are encountered, the HRM Dispatch Centre be called at 490-6203.

At the point in the meeting a page from the HRM website entitled "You have questions?...We have answers!". Ms. Williams will endeavour to have this page

provided in braille.

Ms. Williams suggested that if contacting the numbers provided on this sheet don't provide results, the next step would be to contact your Councillor. It was suggested that the members be provided with an up to date brochure containing information on the Councillors.

Also circulated was a list of frequently used telephone numbers provided by Ms. Cale. (Refer item 4.5.) Mr. Koutroulakis suggested a few changes required on this list. Ms. Cale will revise.

It was concluded that when in doubt as to who to call, the HRM Call Centre should be contacted at 490-4000/6600.

- C Crosswalk installations were requested in the vicinity of 40 Dentith Road and Flamingo Drive by bus stops numbers 1698 and 1705, across from 116 Flamingo Drive. Ms. Langille felt strongly that there should be painted crosswalks in the vicinity of bus stops. In the Flamingo Drive instance, there is only a sidewalk on one side of the street, thus pedestrians have to walk on the street to an intersection with a crosswalk. Mr. Koutroulakis assured the Committee that staff is working with Councillor Whalen on a traffic and pedestrian count in the area.
- C Concern was expressed that drivers are not aware that crosswalks exist at all intersections, whether painted or not, which can create a hazard. It was felt there is a need to education both pedestrians and drivers. An education program, province wide, for 6 to 12 months was envisaged.
- C Bayers Lake Business Park - Concern was expressed regarding the lack of sidewalks in this area which makes it very difficult for pedestrians and those in wheelchairs to get around the shopping district. Access-a-Bus service can't be used due to the shortness of distances. Access-a-Bus can't provide service for a distance less than 200 meters it was noted.

The Chair advised that the Park was originally designed for industrial use, not business. No accommodation was made for sidewalks. Mr. Koutroulakis was questioned as to whether there are any plans to correct this deficiency. He cited one development but was not aware of any long-term plans. It was recalled that the whole traffic situation in the Park has been discussed. The problem in part is due to the area being so successful. Mr. Koutroulakis will contact Greg Rice, Public Works and Transportation, who keeps the sidewalk priority list. It was felt that a major initiative is required to address the needs of this hot spot. When Roel Vis returns he will be asked to have Access-a-Bus review its policies as an interim measure.

Ms. Williams questioned whether low floor buses serving this area would address concerns raised by Ms. MacDonald. If so, it might be an area for this service. It was further suggested that perhaps area business owners might wish to provide a shuttle service between areas of the Park. Mr. Rath, Director, Real Estate Services will be contacted regarding this suggestion.

- C Bayers Road Shopping Centre - A situation at the Shopping Centre which results in jaywalking was raised. Mr. Koutroulakis advised that some counts are being done in this locale.

3.0 **NEW BUSINESS**

3.1 **TAXI SERVICE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Circulated in the agenda package was a memo from the Taxi Committee referring correspondence from Casino Taxi to the Committee. The correspondence dated May 4, 2001 relates to the increasing frequency of taxi drivers refusing service to persons with disabilities, citing concerns for personal injury. It encouraged the Municipality to take a leadership role to ensure reliable, safe and adequate transportation is available to those with disabilities, perhaps through subsidies. It was noted that Metro Transit is subsidized and reference was made to the extra expense involved in providing accessible taxis.

Councillor Sarto suggested this correspondence be referred to the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee.

MOVED by Councillor Sarto and seconded by Ms. Brown that the letter from Casino Taxi be referred to the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Mr. Venus recalled the Committee had met with Councillor Adams, Chair of the Taxi Committee and he thought the issue had been straightened out. The Chair felt the matter warranted a revisit. He recollected training to be more sensitive was to be encouraged.

Ms. MacDonald felt that all taxi drivers should at least be able to read or write properly. For deaf individuals to communicate a designation, this was paramount. The Chair felt they must be able to pass a written examine. Ms. Brown suggested that maybe they are permitted to do an oral exam. It was felt that the licensing requirements should include the ability to read and write effectively. A note will be sent to the Taxi Commission asking if these skills are required.

3.2 **ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE - ANNUAL MEETING**

Circulated in the agenda package was a letter from the ATAC extending an invitation to the Annual Meeting being held June 13, 2001. It was noted that while the correspondence was addressed to the Secretary, it was assumed all the members were invited, given all Access-a-Bus users would be invited. While their monthly meetings are only for Committee members, a meeting is held annually for general input. The Secretary will confirm with Ms. Newcombe.

3.3 **MEETING TIME**

The Chair conveyed to the members problems Ms. LeGay is encountering due to complications associated with her dialysis treatments. He proposed that the members consider a different meeting date or time. Ms. Brown noted that Ms. LeGay's appointments are scheduled for Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The Chair will contact Ms. LeGay in an effort to accommodate her.

Ms. MacDonald noted that from the perspective of having an interpreter, it would be better if the meetings commenced at 4:00 p.m.

3.4 **RAILS TO TRAILS (for)**

Ms. Brown advised that she received a letter from a disabled individual who is having difficulty using the trails in the Hubbards' area. Ms. Brown will fax the correspondence to the Secretary. The Chair will review and if there is nothing he can do to address the matter, the item will be added to next month's agenda.

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

4.1 **CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS AND INADEQUATE CURB CUTS**

The Chair noted that in addition to speaking with Don Maling, he also spoke to David McCusker. He encouraged the members to make direct contact through the numbers provided this evening and if results are not achieved, the situation be brought to the Committee's attention and something in writing can be sent from the Committee.

Ms. MacDonald explained that for the deaf she felt the use of e-mail was better than the relay service.

4.3 **ACCOMMODATION GUIDELINES WORKING GROUP**

The Chair explained that he had this item added to the agenda to revisit it and give some direction to the members of the working group. Remaining members were Ms. Reynold, Mr. Mullins and Ms. Brown. He noted that accommodation is associated with all aspects of accessibility. The subcommittee was struck to review existing guidelines. Guidelines

from Toronto and Peterborough had been circulated to the members. It was foreseen that once the review had been completed and a decision was made on whether anything additional could be added to the examples of guidelines reviewed, a recommendation would be made to Regional Council to adopt the resultant guidelines.

Ms. Williams reflected on the patchwork nature of the guidelines. The Municipal, Provincial and Federal levels of government have various responsibilities. It was felt that the areas the Municipality has jurisdiction/influence over need to be pulled out.

Ms. Street proposed that some confusion may lie in the name itself. She proposed renaming to Municipal Services for People with Disabilities.

Ms. Williams referred the Community and Race Relations Policy and efforts by the Implementation Committee to create awareness within the Municipality. It was felt worthwhile to gather up information on the various initiatives, pull it together and use for a benchmark.

Ms. Williams proposed polling the various Business Units to identify what accommodations they have or are working on for providing accessible services. It was recognized that from the time the sub-committee was set up, a number of additional things may have been put in place.

Ms. Brown noted that she is currently compiling information on concerns in this area for DIAL.

MOVED by Ms. MacDonald and Ms. Street that Ms. Williams be asked to contact HRM business units to identify what accessibility guidelines are in place. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Once the responses are received, the areas needing more work can be identified.

Ms. Williams cautioned against asking Council to approve the Guidelines. If this approach was taken, every time a change was required, approval would be required from Council. She envisaged a less formal approach allowing the Guidelines to evolve over time, as advancements were made by the various business units.

During the above noted discussion, concern was expressed by a member regarding the way a harassment complaint had been handled by the Police Services. Ms. Williams proposed that she might wish to contact her Councillor to set up a meeting with a Police Service representative and/or attend it. In the interim, Ms. Williams offered to place a call to Police Services and look into the matter.

4.4 **FEDERAL DISABILITY COMMISSIONER PROPOSAL**

This item had been initially raised at the March meeting. Ms. Williams will be provided with an extract of the pertinent minutes for her follow-up.

4.5 **FREQUENTLY USED TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Refer item 4.2.

It was felt that essentially three numbers could be used to cover almost any situation, i.e. the Police Service Emergency Number 911; Police Service Non-Emergency Number and HRM Call Centre numbers. In addition, 490-5016 would be useful for reporting incidents.

5.0 **STATUS SHEET**

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

- C No apparent improvement in identification of Councillors and the Districts they represent during Council meetings. Ms. Williams felt a meeting with the Mayor, Councillor Sarto and the Municipal Clerk may be warranted.
- C Agenda package is required by Peggy Brown earlier.
- C Concern was expressed about interpreters for the deaf being only available for the first two hours of a Council session. It was explained that HRM has no objection to providing this service for the entire meeting, but there is a shortage of interpreters. The Chair indicated he will be contacting the Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing regarding this issue.

Ms. Williams proposed that if there is a shortage of interpreters maybe HRM may wish to offer interpreter training to its staff, if this lack of skill and its importance is recognized in the organization.

Councillor Sarto proposed the use of volunteers for this service. During the course of the discussion which followed, it was explained that it takes approximately four years to qualify as a professional interpreter and the importance of using professional interpreters, especially in dealings with services such as police.

The Chair felt there is no harm in the Committee making such a proposal. It may take some time, but he stressed the importance of the Committee "planting seeds".

Ms. MacDonald questioned whether each business unit is equipped with a TTY, accessible twenty-four (24) hours a day. This is something which can be surveyed. Ms. MacDonald questioned the availability of such a service outside the HRM

offices, i.e. payphones. Ms. Williams noted that HRM would not have authority over payphones. She proposed more TTYs might be installed through public education on the need and demand.

CORRESPONDENCE TO CNIB - METRO BUS PASSES

Circulated at the meeting was a letter from the CNIB re Metro Bus Passes from Mr. Taylor, Director of Transit Services advised current passes will be extended to December 31, 2001. Previously Metro Transit had advised the bus passes would only be extended to the end of June 2001.

The Chair advised that the sub-committee to develop a recommendation on this matter, consisting of himself, Roel Vis and Charla Williams has not had an opportunity to make much progress.

Concern was expressed by Ms. MacDonald regarding the impact on deaf and blind individuals who require an intervener to travel with them. A double fare could be required if the passes are suspended. Ms. MacDonald felt there would be merit in meeting with deaf and blind individuals.

Ms. Williams referred to the need for such input. Essentially the sub-committee will be gathering information, developing a recommendation which may or not may be adopted by Council.

The Committee was assured by the Chair that as part of the process a facilitated, open meeting is planned.

Ms. Brown noted that the above noted correspondence will be on the agenda of the next ATAC meeting.

5.1 POLICY UPDATE

Ms. Cale in her Policy Update reported on her meeting with the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee. No firm decisions could be made at the meeting, as there was no quorum. It was decided that two members of each Committee should meet to work on an implementation strategy.

6.0 ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

No minutes for April available.

STATISTICS - ACCESS-A-BUS - JANUARY 2001

Not yet available.

HISTORICAL STATISTICS - ACCESS-A-BUS

Provided in the agenda package were statistics for ridership and revenues. Concern was expressed regarding the small size of the font. It was felt that for ease of reading each of the four sections should be printed on a separate page. Rather than recirculate to everyone, the members were asked to contact the Secretary if they desire an enlarged version.

7.0 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 18, 2001. Ms. Cale gave her regrets.

responsible for crossing guards.

8.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk