

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

MINUTES

NOVEMBER 19, 2001

PRESENT: Paul Connors, Chair
Councillor Sarto
Councillor Meade
Jane Cale
Peggy Brown
Don Mullins
Elsie Cholette
Sally Campbell
Betty MacDonald
Cynthia Street
Bob Venus
Maureen Reynolds
Barbara LeGay

REGRETS: Darrell Robar, *Mary MacDonald* and Ann Langille

STAFF: Charla Williams, Diversity Program Coordinator
Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0.1	Identification of Attendees	3
1.0	Approval of Agenda	3
2.0	Approval of Minutes	3
3.0	New Business	
3.1	HRP Crime Prevention Guide for Persons with Disabilities	4
3.2	Mumford Road Terminal	4 & 5
3.3	Chemical Sensitivity	5 & 6
3.4	Numbering System Back of Buses for Identification	6 & 7
4.0	Business Arising from Minutes	
4.1	Federal Disability Commissioner Proposal	7
4.2	Taxi Service for Persons with Disabilities (Update Proposed Joint Meeting with Taxi Commission)	7 & 8
4.3	Braille of Brochure - Regional Council	8
4.4	Area Rate for Snow Plowing District 15	8
4.5	Clarification of Terms of Reference with Regard to Number of Terms which can be served	9
4.6	Community Grants Program 2002-2003	9 & 10
4.7	Endorsement of the Policy Statement of the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee	10
4.8	Letter from Police Chief re Sign Language	10
4.9	Appointment to ATAC (Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee	11
4.10	Pedestrian Issues	11
5.0	Status Sheet	11
6.0	Next Meeting	11
7.0	Adjournment	11

0.1 IDENTIFICATION OF ATTENDEES AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 4:05 p.m.

The Chair noted that Councillor Blumenthal is no longer a member of the Committee. Councillor Gary Meade has been appointed in his place. It was felt that an expression of thanks to Councillor Blumenthal for his long involvement with the committee would be appropriate. It was noted he had been a strong advocate for the Committee.

1.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

The following items were added to the agenda.

Item 3.3 - Chemical Sensitivity (Maureen Reynolds)

Item 3.4 - Numbering System back of buses for Identification

Item 4.10 - Pedestrian Issues

Ms. Cholette provided the Chair with a copy of a letter from **Mary MacDonald** regarding an experience she had on an **Access-a-Bus**. While sitting at the back of the bus, she suffered whiplash. During the short discussion which followed it was noted by Ms. Brown that Access-a-Bus drivers load passengers according to where they will be dropped off. The Chair noted that he had also received a copy of an e-mail today from Mary MacDonald regarding problems she is encountering getting to meetings associated with Access-a-Bus and procedures related to the use of elevators in Scotia Square after hours.

2.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The September 17, 2001 minutes were approved, as circulated, on motion of Ms. Campbell and Ms. Brown. No changes were required of the notes of October 15, 2001.

3.0 NEW BUSINESS

Councillor Sarto referred to an advertisement he saw inviting individuals with disabilities to a workshop in Sackville. The **workshop** was sponsored by **Human Resources Canada**. Ms. Cale indicated that she was aware of a series of workshops being held in the HRM pertaining to employment. The Chair felt that additional details might be obtained by contacting the HRM's general information line.

Councillor Sarto questioned whether a **replacement for Mr. Roel Vis** has been identified. The Chair assured the members that a letter was sent to Metro Transit requesting a replacement.

3.1 HRP CRIME PREVENTION GUIDE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Chair recalled that at the end of October copies of the above noted guide were sent out to the members for comment. Betty MacDonald, Sally Campbell, Maureen Reynolds and Don Mullins requested copies. They could not recall receiving it.

The Chair questioned whether the version provided in braille was alright. It was noted that the Police Services had converted the format to Word Perfect for braille. Ms. Brown and Ms. LeGay identified some problems with the brailled version, but Ms. LeGay was able to identify what the problem might be to Ed Goodhew, the Print Shop Coordinator. It appears a setting on the machine was set for two sided copying, while one sided copying was done. This has apparently corrected the problem and might resolve other problems earlier identified. A few minor adjustments of a cosmetic nature need to be addressed, i.e. titles appearing at the bottom of pages, problems with bullet indents, etc. It was suggested the School for the Blind or the CNIB be contacted to iron out these remaining problems. It is recognized that Mr. Goodhew has no formal training in the finer aspects of formatting.

(Ms. Williams arrived)

Ms. LeGay expressed concern that the booklet does not include a reference to guide dogs. She also felt individuals should be encouraged to ask who is at the door before opening their door. Reference was made to the Telephone Pioneers having a program involving the installation of intercom. They provide their labour free of charge. Ms. LeGay will e-mail her comments to the Secretary for forwarding to Police Services.

The Chair encouraged members to forward any additional comments as quickly as possible as Police Services want to conclude this project as soon as possible.

3.2 MUMFORD ROAD TERMINAL

☐ Copy of letter to Kevin Murphy, Chair, Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee from Laughie Rutt, Executive Director, Canadian Paraplegic Association dated October 31, 2001 re New Transit Terminal on Mumford Road.

It was reported by Don Mullins that he had contacted the stores and was advised the concerns will be addressed by January. He will check in January to confirm the changes have been made. Ms. Williams asked him to provide her with the name of the contact person. He also noted that it is being proposed that a bus lane pass the various components of the mall complex, with stops along the way, to provide access to individual stores.

Ms. Brown will be attending an Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee next week and will ask that this item be put on their agenda so she can find out more details.

There was a lengthy discussion of how these design deficiencies could have occurred, given the sensitivity for the need for accessibility, particularly from Metro Transit's perspective. The Chair will contact the Director of Engineering and Transportation and Metro Transit. Mr. Connor understood that the transportation staff of the Engineering Department would look at plans. It was suggested that if it is an off street situation, involving private lands, perhaps the HRM's Engineering Department is not involved. Councillor Meade reflected that Building Inspectors deal with the inside of buildings and street inspectors just streets. Ms. Street confirmed that it is not up to HRM inspectors to look at every detail. The onus is with the project's landscape architects and civil engineers. The work should be designed and done to Code. If the work is done wrong, it is their responsibility to rectify. Perhaps it was an oversight. This being the case, Ms. Williams proposed that the various aspects of accessibility may need to be added to a check list.

It was pointed out that it is a lot easier and less expensive to incorporate accessibility features into a design from the start, rather than having to retrofit later on. Reference was made to the requirements of the National Building Code related to accessibility.

It was noted that in order to go from one building to another, you are required to go out-of-doors. The difficulties this presents to seniors and those with disabilities was referred to, as distances and stairs are involved.

Ms. Reynolds reported that a music store, she frequents, is not accessible. It was noted that in the event of an existing building, if the use (occupancy) remains the same, provision for accessibility is not required. The by-law relates only to change of use situations.

The members, when observing infractions, were encouraged to report them through the HRM access numbers provided.

3.3 **CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY**

The Chair noted that Ms. Reynolds wished to bring up the issue of invisible disabilities, to enlighten the members on issues involving chemical sensitivities, particularly as they relate to finding safe places to stay. He noted that as in the past the Committee could be planting a seed, which starts with awareness.

Ms. Reynolds had done some research on the Web and had copies of materials related to multiple chemical sensitivities. Ms. Williams offered to make additional copies. Following the meeting she suggested that the list of these sources might be linked to the Committee's web site.

Ms. Reynolds outlined to the members the difficulties individuals have in finding safe homes, particularly if they are poor. She related examples to the Committee. She did not know what

the Committee can do in this regard, but proposed a letter be written to the Mayor and Council to enlighten them. She sought the Committee's endorsement.

She appealed to the Committee for suggestions on how these people might be helped. The Committee discussed a suggestion that it be required in a large development that a certain percentage of units be designed for people with chemical sensitivities. The success of a building complex, designed for healthy living, in Ottawa was referred to. Reference was made to the fact that in the Municipality there is a problem finding any form of safe, affordable housing.

The Chair proposed that Ms. Reynolds draft the correspondence to the Mayor and Council. Councillor Sarto proposed that in addition to providing information, they be asked to write to the Department of Environment. A package of material could be provided to accompany the correspondence. Ms. Williams noted that any information can be put into the HRM's Corporate Library.

MOVED BY Councillor Sarto and Mr. Venus that correspondence be sent to the Mayor and Councillors on invisible disabilities, particularly related to multiple chemical sensitivities and housing issues, with appropriate information attached. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3.4 NUMBERING SYSTEM - BACK OF BUSES - FOR IDENTIFICATION

Ms. Brown noted that not all buses have numbers on the back. While numbers are changed on the front and sometimes the side, there are some buses which don't display route numbers on the back. This practice is particularly difficult for seniors and individuals with vision problems. By displaying numbers on the back, individuals would not have to needlessly run for the wrong buses.

Mr. Mullins advised that he called Transit Services and was advised that their policy has not changed in this regard, ie. numbers are to be displayed on the back of buses. It was felt that some drivers may not do so.

Ms. Brown proposed that a letter be written to Metro Transit alerting them of this concern and the importance of displaying and changing the numbers, particularly on the back of buses. The Chair suggested she also raise her concern with the ATAC (Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee).

The Chair felt that the design of buses should incorporate electronic digital displays to facilitate the drivers changing the numbers. Changes could thus be made simultaneously to the front, side and rear of buses. Ms. Williams felt this feature may have already been incorporated into the new bus designs, but the older buses pose a problem.

The Chair asked Ms. Williams to draft the correspondence with input from Ms. Brown and Mr. Mullins. The draft can be dealt with at the next meeting.

Ms. LeGay referred to an experiment in Ottawa, with electronic announcements of numbers, similar to elevator floor numbers being announced. She reflected that if sighted or partially sighted individuals have problems identifying bus numbers, one can appreciate problems encountered by the blind. She felt it would be interesting to look into the outcome of Ottawa's experiment and/or investigate what technology is available in this regard. Reference was made to the Americans with Disabilities Act and improvements which have resulted in transit systems associated with it. Ms. LeGay felt an automatic announcement would be preferable to bus drivers, having to make them. The Chair agreed that whatever can be implemented, so as not to distract drivers would be preferable. Ms. Williams will send an e-mail to appropriate Transit Services staff versus a formal letter from the Committee. Copies to be provided for the next meeting. Secretary to be copied.

A question was posed regarding who would be responsible for accessibility issues given Roel Vis is no longer with Transit Services. Councillor Sarto noted Kenny Silver is in charge of operations.

4.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

4.1 **FEDERAL DISABILITY COMMISSIONER PROPOSAL**

Deferred.

Ms. Brown related a conversation she had with her brother in Brockville, Ont. There is a new law, with a fine of \$5,000 for parking in accessible parking spots.

4.2 **TAXI SERVICE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (UPDATE PROPOSED JOINT MEETING WITH TAXI COMMISSION)**

C Letter to the Chair dated November 5, 2001 from Sherryll Murphy, Assistant Municipal Clerk, Taxi & Limousine Committee.

C Staff Report dated September 12, 2001 from Peter James, Regional Co-ordinator of By-Law Enforcement re Providing Safe and Reliable Transportation to the Disabled Community.

The correspondence proposed a joint meeting to be held Monday, December 17, 2001, Halifax Hall, Halifax City Hall.

It was decided that the Committee would meet at its regular time of 4:00 p.m. to deal with any

business. Later in the meeting, due to loss of quorum and time constraints, it was decided to defer items 4.7 on until the December meeting.

Ms. LeGay recalled that she was to draft a letter to Councillor Adams, Chair of the Taxi and Limousine Committee outlining issues the disabled community has with the taxi services. Input was sought from members. Ms. LeGay questioned whether there was value in continuing with this initiative. The Chair felt there was merit. He felt if the members of the Taxi and Limousine Committee received copies through their Chair it would be worthwhile. The Committee members will also receive in advance of the meeting.

The major issues to date are as follows:

- C Accessible Taxis not being available at night and on weekends.
- C Sensitivity training of taxi drivers.
- C Registry of taxi drivers who claim to have allergies, related to dogs for example.

4.3 **BRAILLING OF BROCHURE - REGIONAL COUNCIL**

Ms. LeGay reported that the format used to produce the Regional Council brochure is in a lotus format which can't be converted to braille. The brochure would have to be developed in a different format to allow for conversion, i.e. no columns. It has to be in a linear format. Both Ms. LeGay and Ms. Brown indicated they would be happy to proofread.

4.4 **AREA RATE FOR SNOW PLOWING DISTRICT 15**

Deferred.

It was noted that Regional Council recently approved \$20,000 to be used to offset the cost of snow removal required by seniors and individuals with disabilities, who meet certain criteria. It was stressed that this is meant to be a policy of last resort. Individuals' families and friends should be encouraged to help as much as possible. It was requested that a copy of the report be provided to the members.

Ms. LeGay noted that even if one can afford to pay for private snow removal, it can be hard to find someone to do the work. Councillor Sarto referred to an initiative involving senior services centres maintaining a registry of individuals willing to perform this function.

4.5 **CLARIFICATION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE WITH REGARD TO NUMBER OF TERMS WHICH CAN BE SERVED**

The Secretary advised that the report to the Membership Selection Committee is being prepared by the Municipal Clerk. It is anticipated that recommendations will be going to

Regional Council before the end of the month.

Ms. LeGay recalled that when the initial deadline was passed, it was extended. She wondered if applications are still being accepted. Staff indicated to her that they would be and if they did not make the list to the Selection Committee this time, could be included in a future submission.

Ms. Williams referred to the terms of reference limiting membership to three terms of two years. She noted that for a number of members this requirement would result in them having to take a year off before they could reapply for membership on the Committee. She encouraged the members to consider application to other HRM Boards and Committees, as the Municipality is anxious to have diversity represented throughout, not just limited to the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities and Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee. She also encouraged the members to suggest to their acquaintances application to the various boards and committees.

Ms. LeGay requested an application package in braille.

4.6 **COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM 2002-2003**

Ms. Cale reiterated comments she had made at the previous meeting that under one aspect of the program, HRM committees can apply for funding. She referred to the notes of the October meeting. It was proposed that an application(s) be made under Inclusion Programs related to making the HRM Website more accessible and conducting a survey of services within HRM which are accessible.

Reflecting on the HRM Website, Ms. Williams recalled the HRM Web Master dealt with this subject in the past, prior to Ms. Cale's appointment to the Committee. She recalled the site scored quite high in the range of accessibility. Ms. LeGay confirmed that from her perspective, the HRM Website is quite accessible. Nevertheless, it was felt it would be worthwhile determining what had been done. Ms. Cale will follow up with Kelly Marney.

It was felt that the subject of making an application under the Community Grants Program should be on the January 2002 agenda.

Referring to the suggestion that a survey be conducted, Ms. Williams expressed confidence that this could be done via e-mail to the various business units. Reference was made to the Community and Race Relations Policy Implementation Committee. They have developed a check list which asks a number of questions on what they are doing to accommodate diversity. It is inclusive. They are getting ready to recirculate this annual check list. It had also been the intention to do a survey on accessibility issues related to Diversity Week in September. It is felt that it is better to do a series of surveys than one large one. She questioned the

Committee applying for funding to engage consultants to do such surveys, if it has not been determined that staff can't do them.

A discussion followed on various surveys that have already been done or are in the process of being done, i.e. a survey of accessibility to public buildings being done by the Provincial Government; a review of restaurants conducted by the Human Rights Commission and resultant book published.

Ms. Williams indicated she would have difficulty supporting a survey of private buildings, over which the HRM and thus the Committee has very little influence. Any survey of buildings, which are accessible or not, would be very large. Nevertheless, the Chair felt that such a survey would be advantageous in identifying how many buildings in the community are still not accessible and thus the need to improve the by-laws to address the situation.

Ms. Cholette reflected on the limitations in the Building Code, noting that as long as provision is made for barrier free access from the street into a building, the individual units can still have inaccessible washrooms and kitchens.

Due to the loss of a quorum and it being after 6:00 p.m., with the agreement of the remaining members, the balance of the agenda will be dealt with at the December meeting.

4.7 **ENDORSEMENT OF THE POLICY STATEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

C e-mail dated September 18, 2001 from Jane Cale.

Deferred.

4.8 **LETTER FROM POLICE CHIEF RE SIGN LANGUAGE**

Before departing early in the meeting, Ms. MacDonald alerted the members that she has misplaced the correspondence dated September 18, 2001 from the Police Chief in response to concerns Ms. MacDonald had about the HRP's service delivery to the deaf community. She asked the Secretary to provide her with another copy.

Item deferred to December.

4.9 **APPOINTMENT TO ATAC (ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE)**

Deferred.

4.10 **PEDESTRIAN ISSUES**

- C e-mail response from David McCusker regarding whether the HRM had a committee addressing pedestrian needs, similar to the Bike Task Force.

Deferred.

5.0 **STATUS SHEET**

- C Status Sheet for November
- C Strategy - Ms. Cale proposed this organizational strategy to enhance the listing of items under Activity 4 and 5. Secondly it might clarify what those activities represent.

6.0 **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held Monday, December 17, 2001, at 4:00 p.m., Halifax Hall, Halifax City Hall. A Joint Meeting with the Taxi and Limousine Committee will commence at 4:30 p.m.

7.0 **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Before departing, Ms. Brown alerted the members that the **ATAC** is planning a dedication to **Marg Hiltz**.

Mr. Connors had a flyer from **N. A. C. Consulting** which offered a whole range of services. He emphasized he was not recommending the service, but knew the principal, Nancy Cockran.

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk