

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

MINUTES

JUNE 17, 2002

PRESENT: Mr. Paul Connors, Chair
Councillor Sarto
Councillor Meade
Ms. Elsie Cholette
Ms. Anne Langille
Ms. Sally Campbell
Ms. Joeanne Coffey
Ms. Peggy Brown
Ms. Cynthia Street
Ms. Jane Cale

ABSENT: Mr. Ben Marston
Mr. Don Mullins (regrets)
Mr. Bob Venus (regrets)
Ms. Betty MacDonald (regrets)
Ms. Mary MacDonald
Mr. Ken Hines
Ms. Maureen Reynolds
Inspector Falkenham (regrets)

ALSO PRESENT: Ms. Charla Williams, Diversity Program Coordinator
Mr. Kevin Hindle, Supervisor, Special Services, Metro Transit
Ms. Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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Meeting called to order by the Chair at 4:15 p.m., Training Room, 3rd Floor Duke Tower.

Concern was expressed regarding the difficulty in achieving a quorum the last few months. It was suggested that the individuals who have not attended for sometime be written. The correspondence would indicate that if they are not heard from by the next meeting, it is assumed there are no longer interested in being a member of the Committee. The letter would thank them for their participation to date.

Councillor Sarto reported that Joanne Coffey and he had attended the official opening of the stairs and ramp reconstructed between Alderney Gate and the School Board buildings. He noted that Ms. Coffey had been interviewed by both radio and television.

The Chair thanked both Ms. Coffey and Councillor Sarto for attending on the Committee's behalf.

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

At the request of Peggy Brown, item 5.2 was added to the agenda re VIA Rail - Issue Concerning Persons with Disabilities. Also item 5.3 - CNIB Construction.

The agenda, as amended, was approved on motion of Councillor Sarto and Councillor Meade.

2.0 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the May 27, 2002 were adopted, as circulated, on motion of Ms. Cholette and Ms. Cale.

3.0 **STATUS SHEET**

CNIB BUS PASSES - The original motion passed by Regional Council at its January 23, 2001 meeting was circulated in the agenda package. The motion reads:

MOVED by Councillor Hetherington, seconded by Deputy Mayor Blumenthal, that this matter (Special Passes for the Blind Metro Transit Users) be referred to the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, in consultation with the CNIB, for a report recommending a policy that HRM could use with respect to special passes for disabled users of Metro Transit.

During debate of this item, it was recalled that while Councillor Hetherington had raised concerns regarding the possibility of blind Metro Transit users losing their free bus passes in June, the motion refers to special passes for disabled users on Metro Transit.

It was suggested that this matter originally arose during Metro Transit's budget process, when areas for possibly reducing expenses were considered.

As in the past a lengthy debate ensued, illustrating the complexities of the matter, but noting that some sort of response must be prepared to Regional Council, noting that for the time being the situation has been resolved, i.e. the bus passes have been extended indefinitely.

Issues discussed included:

- C The history surrounding the issuance of the free bus passes to the blind.
- C The trend that most people with disabilities want to be treated as the rest of the public.
- C Maybe the onus should be placed on the CNIB or other disabilities groups to pay for and provide free bus passes to their members based on economic need. It was decided that writing such a letter to CNIB would not be appropriate.
- C If Council needs a policy, with respect of special passes for the disabled users of Metro Transit, a study be conducted by staff. The Committee does not have the resources to do the necessary research and analyse the matter. The Committee is only advisory to Council. The drafting of policy would involve Metro Transit personnel. The Committee, however, would be pleased to review the draft policy.

When developing such a policy, such items as the following be taken into consideration:

- C CNIB has had free bus passes for sometime. Should they be grandfathered?
- C All persons with disabilities should have free access to buses?

It was felt that Legal Services, staff and representatives from the various organizations will have to be involved in the drafting of a policy.

While the resultant policy may not address everyone's concerns, everyone's concerns should be considered in developing the policy.

- C Fairness and equality
- C Implications on the budget

In conclusion, Ms. Williams and Mr. Hindle volunteered to draft a report for the Committee's consideration at the July meeting.

Crosswalks and Curb Cuts for Wheelchairs - Regional Council, March 2000 - The Chair advised in progress. Not totally resolved, but will be shortly.

4.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

4.1 **BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN CONCERNS**

It was felt there was no need to have this item on the agenda. It would simply suffice to send the agenda to Wayne Groszko.

Ms. Cholette referred to the various hand signals used by bicycle riders. It was felt that there is a need to educate both bicycle riders and drivers about these signals.

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

The Chair reported that he spoke to Betty Thomas, the Chair of the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee in May regarding the proposed joint presentation to Regional Council. A number of dates were given for consideration. The Committee was advised that the last date Regional Council meets before its summer break is July 16th. The Chair will follow-up with Ms. Thomas.

A discussion followed on the form the report should take, i.e. information verses report with recommendation and whether the presentation should be made to Committee of the Whole or Regional Council. While there would be more time given for the presentation at Committee of the Whole, more exposure would be given to the two committees at a regular Regional Council session. If it was in the form of a regular agenda item, there would be more leeway allowed for the length of the presentation. Ms. Williams noted that no changes are proposed to the policy, just the endorsement of the policy by the Committee. Nevertheless, it was felt that since Regional Council approved the policy initially, they should formally recognize the endorsement of the Policy by the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities.

4.3 **DRAFT CORRESPONDENCE TO MAYOR, HOUSING CONCERNS OF THOSE WITH CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY**

Deferred in absence of Ms. Reynolds. The Chair indicated that Ms. Reynolds has not got back to him.

4.4 **WEST END MALL TRAFFIC CONCERNS**

Concerns related to the West End Mall pedestrian and transit access were again brought forward. For example, Ms. Brown noted that the shuttle service operated on

Saturday, is difficult for disabled individuals to use because of the high step.

Mr. Hindle advised that it is anticipated that the situation will be made worse with the opening of a new drive-through Tim Hortons at the corner of Romans Avenue. Congestion will increase.

Further discussion deferred in absence of Mr. Mullins.

4.5 **PLAYGROUNDS**

The Chair has heard nothing further from Parks and Recreation staff, but assured the members that he passed along the comments of the Committee regarding making playgrounds more accessible to staff. The item will be put on the status sheet.

4.6 **CROSSING AT ALMON - VICINITY OF CNIB**

When an update is received from Mr. McCusker, the Chair will bring to the Committee's attention. Item deferred and referred to status sheet.

Referring to the item, Ms. Brown had asked be added to the agenda, item 5.3 - CNIB Construction, Ms. Brown was pleased to report that in the rebuilding of Almon Street, new crosswalks with audible signals are being installed.

Ms. Williams reflected on comments made by a staff member following an awareness session of obstacles faced by blind pedestrians. Staff left the session with a new appreciation of obstacles faced by the disabled. She noted that it is the intention to run a similar session during Work Place Diversity Week.

5.0 **NEW BUSINESS**

The Chair advised the Committee that Peggy Brown had recently received an Hourglass Pioneer Award for her contributions over the past twenty-five (25) years to access awareness.

5.1 **NOVA SCOTIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - APPLICATION FOR GRANTS**

Circulated in the agenda package was correspondence dated May 24, 2002 from the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission regarding an application process to receive grants to fund projects that will help people with mental disabilities work through the N.S. justice system and access other advocacy services. It was noted that the deadline for applications is Friday, June 21, 2002. The members were encouraged by the Chair to pass along this information to any contacts who would be interested in applying for

these funds.

5.2 **VIA RAIL - ISSUE CONCERNING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Ms. Brown outlined to the Committee problems encountered by an individual in obtaining a free fare, which would have covered rail fare for an attendant to a disabled individual. A discussion followed on whether a doctor's letter or completion of a certain form by a doctor would have been required or alternatively a pass provided by the Abilities Foundation. Whether the problem was associated with the travel agency involved or Via Rail was discussed. Ms. Williams suggested a complaint be filed with the Human Rights Commission. The Abilities Foundation might act as an advocate to get the fare reimbursed. Ms. Cholette indicated she would be interested in knowing what is required to have an attendant travel with a disabled person at no cost.

5.3 **CNIB CONSTRUCTION**

See item 4.6 - Crossing at Almon - Vicinity of CNIB.

6.0 **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held Monday, July 15, 2002. The Committee decided that the August meeting will not be held.

7.0 **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:30 p.m.

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk