

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES SEPTEMBER 16, 2002

PRESENT: Mr. Paul Connors, Chair
Ms. Anne Langille
Ms. Peggy Brown
Ms. Betty MacDonald
Ms. Barb LeGay
Mr. Bob Venus
Ms. Maureen Reynolds
Councillor Sarto
Councillor Meade
Ms. Cynthia Street

ABSENT WITH REGRETS: Ms. Sally Campbell (with regrets)
Ms. Joanne Coffey (with regrets)

ALSO PRESENT: Inspector Falkenham, HRP
Mr. Chris Racine, Interpreter
Ms. Laura Bartlett, Interpreter
Ms. Charla Williams, Diversity Program Coordinator
Mr. Kevin Hindle, Special Projects, Metro Transit
Ms. Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 4:05 p.m. Training Room, 3rd Floor Duke Tower.

During introductions, it was identified there were two visitors, Lynn DeMont and Ann Duffy of DIAL re an added item related to Point Pleasant Park. Also attending the meeting for item 5.4 with Cathy Mellett were Jim Donovan, Acting Manager, Building and Inspections and Sharon Bond, Regional Coordinator, Subdivision/Development.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

An added items list was circulated consisting of items Peggy Brown had requested be added. The list contained the three following items:

- C HRM Parks Control re Point Pleasant Park
- C Accessible Parking
- C Increased Taxi Fares
- C Bouquet - Park Woodlawn, District 7

These items were added as 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8 under New Business.

Mr. Venus requested that an item be added under New Business, item 5.9 re a bouquet associated with the installation of a playground at Mount Edward Elementary School.

The order of the agenda was changed so that items 5.1/5.4 and 5.6 could be dealt with first, as there were a number of individuals in attendance for them.

MOVED BY Ms. Brown and seconded by Mr. Venus that the agenda, be adopted with the above noted additions. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED BY Councillor Sarto and seconded by Ms. Street that the minutes of the June 17, 2002 meeting be adopted, as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Notes of the July 15, 2002 meeting were circulated in the agenda package.

3. STATUS SHEET

Copies of the Status Sheet, dated September 2002, were circulated at the meeting.

Concern was expressed regarding a number of outstanding issues on the Status Sheet, in particular a cross walk issue in Rockingham. This item and others were deferred to

the October meeting. It was also noted that a Committee consisting of Jane Cale and Barb LeGay had been struck to work on the Status Sheet. Ms. Cale was not in attendance. (Refer item 5.3 - Resignation of Vice-Chair, Jane Cale) Item deferred.

CNIB BUS PASSES

Mr. Hindle explained why there was no draft letter prepared. Although both he and Ms. Williams had not attended the July meeting, it was apparent from the draft minutes that concern had been expressed that there is an issue of conflict of interest when staff drafts reports and correspondence on behalf of the Committee. Referring to the lengthy history of this item, he felt it would be more appropriate for members, who had served on the Committee during the course of discussions, to sit down and draft a response, as he felt at a disadvantage having been only associated with the Committee for a short period of time.

The Clerk passed along Joanne Coffey's comments to the Chair, in the event a committee was struck to do the draft.

Ms. LeGay tried to clarify her remarks, noting that her comments were general in nature and not specific to this one item. She observed that the Committee is supposed to be independent and she did not feel that it should get into the habit of passing along such work to staff. She was not sure if the rest of the Committee shared her point of view regarding the appropriateness of staff drafting reports and correspondence.

The Chair, reflecting on his previous work experience with HRM felt that essentially staff was just doing the leg work to help facilitate the Committee's work.

During the ensuing discussion, the following topics were revisited:

- C How the request had come to the Committee from Regional Council at the time Metro Transit was looking for options to reduce its budget.
- C How the issue evolved from just bus passes for the blind being considered to the whole area of passes for the disabled.
- C The Committee did not have the resources to fully investigate. The report should recommend to Council the need to direct the matter to appropriate staff for investigation.
- C Since the issue has been dropped by Metro Transit, perhaps the Committee should remain silent on the matter, but as pointed out by a member is it fair that other disabled individuals groups don't have the same advantage.
- C The subject was dealt with at the ATAC. They felt if bus passes are given out to one group with a disability, the other groups should not be treated differently.
- C Budget constraints.
- C The Committee is not here to take away the benefits of any disabled group.

- C The blind and visually impaired don't have the option of driving themselves.
- C The low floor bus design to accommodate wheelchairs has made it more difficult for the blind and visually impaired to use public transit.
- C The additional capital cost of low floor buses.
- C Initial discussion revealed it to be a very complex matter, due to complicating factors.
- C Any recommendation made by the Committee, re Metro Transit services, will apply to all HRM services.
- C History of why the passes were introduced for the blind.

In conclusion, Ms. Williams was asked to draft a response to Council, indicating that the Committee can't answer their request, as there are too many issues involved and recommending a staff committee needs to investigate. Councillor Meade questioned if this request was directed to Metro Transit staff would they have the resources to deal with the matter. It was noted that three or four reports have already been drafted on the subject.

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

4.1 ENDORSEMENT OF THE POLICY STATEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Deferred.

4.2 DRAFT CORRESPONDENCE TO MAYOR RE HOUSING CONCERNS OF THOSE WITH CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY

Copies of the draft provided by Ms. Reynolds were circulated to the members. The item was deferred to the next meeting, as there was not enough time for discussion this evening.

Concern was expressed regarding the second recommendation pertaining to some of the \$37,000,000 recently announced for affordable housing to be devoted to housing for individuals with multi-chemical sensitivities. It was suggested that Ms. Reynolds contact Peter Christie, Community Services in the interim.

In the event Ms. Reynolds can't attend the October meeting, the Chair will see the subject is dealt with.

4.3 WEST END MALL TRAFFIC CONCERNS

Ms. Brown referred to a meeting scheduled for the CNIB, 3:00 p.m., Tuesday, September 17, 2002.

4.4 MEMBERS TERMS UP IN 2002

The Clerk identified that Mr. Connors, Ms. Langille, Ms. LeGays, Ms. Brown and Ms. MacDonald's terms were up November 2002. She noted the deadline for applications is September 30, 2002.

4.5 SMOKE AND SCENT FREE TAXIS

Copies of Ms. LeGay's letter to the Chair of the HRM Taxi Committee re the above were circulated to the members. If no comments are received from the members in the next couple of days, she proposed to send out.

4.6 TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS - OUTCOME OF BARB LEGAY'S RESEARCH OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES PROGRAMS

Deferred.

5.0 NEW BUSINESS

5.1 BARRIER-FREE DESIGN DISCUSSION PAPER AND QUESTIONNAIRE

5.4 VIBRANT CITY AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES TASK GROUP OF REGIONAL PLANNING

As previously noted Cathy Mellet, Sharon Bond and Jim Donovan were present for these items.

C Workbook "Healthy Growth for HRM - A Regional Plan for the next 25 years of growth in HRM" had been provided in the July agenda package.

C Barrier-free Design Discussion Paper and Questionnaire, related to item 5.1, had been circulated with today's agenda package.

Ms. Mellett thanked the Committee for including Item 5.4 on today's agenda and noted the overlap with Item 5.1. In her introduction, she made reference to the four strategic areas (task groups) in the plan, noting her focus is on Vibrant City and Healthy Communities. Ms. Mellett noted that the latter is one of the aspects she wants to make sure is addressed. She referred to the barrier free access component. She noted that Planning and Development Services administers aspects related to this component, thus the attendance of Ms. Bond and Mr. Donovan.

She stressed the importance of the Committee or individual members giving their put through both the Healthy Growth for HRM Workbook, on their vision for barrier free access in the Region and the Questionnaire on the Discussion Paper from the N.S.

Building Advisory Committee re Barrier-free Requirements of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations. The latter process is an opportunity for all Nova Scotians to have input into the Building Code.

It was explained to the members that input into the latter is very important, as it is HRM's practice to adopt the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations. Reference was made to the Federal Government's National Building Code, which the Province modifies to ensure local needs are addressed adequately. It was noted that Mr. Donovan sits on their Nova Scotia Building Advisory Committee. The Clerk was provided with a copy of an e-mail from Alan Taylor, Transportation Planner re On-Street Accommodation for Handicapped Persons. Reference is made to the HRM Red Book Specs (Municipal Service Systems - Design Guidelines and Standard Details). Specifics regarding sidewalk widths, location of pedestrian ramps and widths, etc.

The following points were raised by members:

- C Barrier Free Access is often seen from the perspective of those in wheelchairs, but not from the viewpoint of the blind and visually impaired.

Mr. Donovan noted that the Building Code deals with buildings versus streets and right-of-ways are designed to Municipal standards.

In response, reference was made to the need for railings and orange strips on steps and glass doors to aid those who are visually impaired. Mr. Donovan concurred these are the sort of technical issues under the Building Code they are attempting to address. He noted that there are limitations on what can be done with regard to existing buildings. It was argued that there would be a small cost associated with providing orange strips.

- C Reference was made to establishments, such as Tim Hortons, having wheelchair accessible washrooms, but the braille identification on the doors can't be read by all those who are blind and visually impaired.

- C Based on the Chair's experience, he noted that if anything was identified as lacking in the Building Code, the Municipality would add onto the Building Code through the By-law process. He also noted the importance of getting the Committee's comments in, as local issues can sometimes end up on the National Building Code agenda.

- C Reference was made to the input of the Committee into the 20/20 Vision process. While Ms. Mallett had a summary of input, she did not have the actual submission from the Committee. The Clerk will endeavour to provide her with a copy.

- C It was noted that the N.S. League for Equal Opportunity (NSLEO) has recently completed a Barrier Free survey. It is available from their Website.
- C It was confirmed that the Building Code applies to establishments such as Tim Hortons. This being the case, reference was made to drive-throughs not accommodating the deaf and hard of hearing. Staff referred to their observations that technology may be catching up which will address this issue.
- C Reference was made to the issue of Universal Design, as adopted by the City of Winnipeg. These designs permit everyone to access facilities. Reference was made to the input the Winnipeg Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities had into this initiative related to municipal buildings.
- C Reference was made to the percentage of residents of HRM identified as having a disability which would support setting the bar high.
- C Issues related to chemical sensitivities should be included, ie.
 - C housing, i.e. large complexes set aside units with no carpets and not exposed to dryer vent exhausts and swimming pools, related to air flow back into building.
 - C barrier free washrooms (deodorizers be substituted with baking soda, for example)
 - C cleaners used

Air quality issues, which fall under Environmental Design criteria, contained in part 5 of the Building Code.

A copy of a report drafted on Housing for Regional Council was provided to Ms. Mellett.

It was concluded that it would be advantageous if the members would submit their completed Questionnaires on the N.S. Building Advisory Committee's Discussion Paper to the Clerk. She would photocopy the responses and provide copies to the members for the October meeting. Since the next meeting is October 21st, the questionnaires could be sent in together for the October 31st deadline.

A discussion followed on whether the Province would accept responses on disk, tape or in braille. Mr. Donovan will check with Mr. Ross.

5.2 SIDEWALK CAFES

Deferred.

5.3 RESIGNATION OF VICE-CHAIR

Deferred.

5.5 OMG ATLANTIC - SIDEWALK RECEPTACLES

Deferred.

5.6 HRM PARKS CONTROL RE POINT PLEASANT PARK

- C Copy of a letter dated September 7, 2002 to Mr. Art Sampson re BBQ held by Disabled Individuals Alliance (DIAL) and problems which were encountered.

Ms. Lynn DeMont, the author of the letter, was present to give more details to the Committee on what took place on the day of the BBQ. Some of the main concerns related to:

- C Only one vehicle was allowed in for the event. Ms. Brown reflected that more vehicles had been permitted in past years.
- C BBQ pits are not located in an accessible area. They need to be located closer to the parking lot and washrooms.
- C Access-a-Bus was not permitted this year to enter the Park to drop people off. In past years Access-a-Bus was allowed to drop participants off and pick them up.
- C attitudes

Ms. DeMont wondered if there is anyway to make the Park more accessible to the disabled.

It was noted that there is a Point Pleasant Park Commission. It was suggested that some of the policies for the operation of the Park may require review. Concern was expressed that some of the problems may have been due to a misunderstanding or lack of communication. Ms. Brown and Ms. DeMont assured the members that when they called, they stressed the BBQ was for disabled individuals.

Since another BBQ is planned for next year, it was felt important that the situation be addressed. Perhaps the guidelines need to be changed.

Ms. LeGay noting that the Committee has been asked to help this group, questioned what are the regulations for use of the Park; whether exceptions can be made; and what is the proper way for a group of people with disabilities to take advantage of the park facilities. She felt either Mr. Sampson or the Point Pleasant Park Commission should be contacted to obtain clarification and to discuss how the facilities can be made more accessible for a function or BBQ.

Ms. Williams saw the situation as being more a complaint related to services, i.e. a community group not being able to receive services from HRM. She did not feel it is an issue the Committee should pursue, noting there are processes in place to lay a complaint. The Director of Parks and Recreation Services should look into complaints regarding access. The Committee might be able to offer advice on how the regulations can be changed to accommodate persons with disabilities. This could be done by passing the complaint along, requesting a response back to DIAL. The Committee would like to be informed of the outcome. If not satisfied, as an advisory committee of Regional Council, it could become more directly involved. She felt it was important that groups know the avenues of handling such situations.

It was decided that the Committee should postpone becoming involved to allow Mr. Sampson time to respond to the concerns expressed in the correspondence. It should be requested that a copy of Mr. Sampson's response be provided to the Committee. In the event, he did not respond or the response was inadequate, it was felt Karen MacTavish, Director, Parks and Recreation Services, should be advised. The Committee could follow-up on the group's behalf.

If there is a rule against buses entering the Park, it was suggested that a distinction needs to be made between regular buses and Access-a-Bus. Ms. Williams concurred, noting that there may be need for the regulations to be adjusted and some education may be required. For example, when a request is made from a disabled group, staff should be soliciting from the group what can be done to accommodate their special needs.

Feedback from Peggy Brown or Ms. DeMont was requested. The Committee will follow-up on if the response isn't adequate.

5.7 ACCESSIBLE PARKING

Deferred.

5.8 INCREASED TAXI FARES

Deferred.

5.9 BOUQUET - PARK - MOUNT EDWARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr. Venus wanted to alert the Committee to the work done by Councillor Sarto, the Woodlawn community and Home Depot related to construction of an accessible playground.

The Chair requested that this item be brought forward to the October meeting, as he felt

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it merited a letter of appreciation being written to Councillor Sarto and Home Depot for their efforts.

6. NEXT MEETING

The next regularly scheduled meeting is to be held Monday, October 21, 2002.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Due to the late hour, the balance of the agenda could not be dealt with.

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk