

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES NOVEMBER 18, 2002

PRESENT: Ms. Cynthia Street, Acting Chair
Mr. Don Mullins
Ms. Peggy Brown
Mr. Bob Venus
Councillor Meade
Ms. Betty MacDonald
Ms. Anne Langille
Ms. Maureen Reynolds
Ms. Joanne Coffey

ABSENT: Councillor Sarto (regrets)
Ms. Elsie Cholette
Ms. Sally Campbell (regrets)
Ms. Jane Cale (regrets)
Ms. Barbara LeGay
Mr. Paul Connors (regrets)

ALSO PRESENT: Inspector Cliff Falkenham, HRP
Kevin Hindle, Sup. Special Services, Metro Transit
Charla Williams, Diversity Program Coordinator
Wayne Groszko, Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator
Mr. Eric Mitchell, DIAL (guest)
Mr. Chris Racine, Interpreter
Ms. Laura Bartlett, Interpreter
Ms. Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Street, Acting Chair at 4:00 p.m. in the Training Room, 3rd Floor Duke.

During the introductions, Mr. Mullins introduced Eric Mitchell of DIAL, a guest.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED BY Councillor Meade and seconded by Ms. Brown that the October 21, 2002 minutes be adopted, as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Ms. Reynolds requested that an item be added under New Business, item 5.5 - Smoking By-law.

The agenda was adopted, as revised, by consensus.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES AND STATUS SHEET

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

Deferred in absence of Mr. Connors.

4.2 CROSSWALK ISSUES

Ms. MacDonald reported that she had spoken to the mother of the deaf child. This ongoing issue was left in the hands of Ms. MacDonald and the mother. If there is any correspondence, the Committee would like a copy.

If anything new comes up with respect to Ms. Langille's concern, she will raise again.

Ms. Williams advised that she had contacted Mr. McCusker regarding criteria for the location of crosswalks. She was referred to the Public Works and Transportation website, under the crosswalk section.

4.3 SIDEWALK CAFES

In addition to correspondence previously circulated between the Canadian Paraplegic Association, the Chair and Mr. Barrett dated March 5, 2002 and August 14, 2002 respectively, the following letters were provided in the agenda package:

- C Letter from Kevin Barrett to Mr. Connors dated November 1, 2002, copied to the CPA. The letter essentially states that the process is starting all over again and it is anticipated that a policy will be approved and implemented for the 2003 season.
- C Letter to Mr. Connors dated November 5, 2002 from Mr. Rutt, Executive Director, CPA, copied to Mr. Barrett, indicating the Association is not pleased with the nature of the response.

The Clerk noted that Mr. Barrett was unable to attend today's meeting as he was on vacation.

Councillor Meade suggested it might be worthwhile corresponding with Mr. McCusker referring to Mr. Rutt's letter of November 5, 2002.

Ms. Coffey referred to the public meeting held in February 2002 on proposals by staff to deal with problems associated with sidewalk cafes. The business people who attended felt the solutions proposed were not workable and thus it appears staff has started the process over again. Ms. Coffey noted that problems with sidewalk cafes have existed for years. She stressed not only are some not accessible, but it is difficult or impossible to get around them.

Ms. Williams reflecting that there was a lot of opposition from the business community, felt there is a need for lobbying and education.

Ms. Reynolds raised another issue associated with Sidewalk Cafes, i.e. the use of preserved lumber which contains arsenic. At the very least, she felt the businesses should be required to paint this lumber to help seal in the arsenic.

During the ensuing discussions, a number of questions were raised on this subject. It was concluded that Mr. Barrett be invited to the January 2003 meeting for an update on what the Committee can expect to see in the near future and down the road. It was emphasized that it would be preferable if Mr. Barrett had the questions in advance of this meeting. It was suggested that they could be e-mailed to him.

Some questions raised at the meeting related to the following:

- C Where do Building Regulations come in?

- C If sidewalk cafes are supposed to be accessible, what is by-law enforcement doing?
- C If sidewalk space is being used for cafes, would this change of use require barrier-free design requirements to be met?

In the interim, Ms. Reynolds will provide Mr. Barrett some information on concerns associated with the use of preserved lumber.

4.4 DRAFT TO COUNCIL RE CNIB BUS PASSES

As per the Committee's instructions, Ms. Williams has been working on a response to a motion from Council's January 23, 2001 meeting. The motion indicated this matter be referred to the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, in consultation with the CNIB for a report recommending policy with respect to special passes for disabled users of Metro Transit. It was recalled that the issue arose during budget deliberations when it was proposed that there might be some financial benefits to Metro Transit if the practice of providing bus passes to the blind was stopped. It then evolved into considering the subject of bus passes in general.

Based on earlier findings and debate, the letter will recommend to Regional Council that they refer the matter back to staff for a more in depth review, for example research on how bus passes are handled by other municipalities and the concerns of the various groups. The Committee had found the matter was too complex and unwieldy for the Committee to deal with.

A general discussion followed on whether only bus passes for the blind were the subject of the motion or bus passes for the disabled in general. Ms. MacDonald reflected that it would not be financially feasible to provide bus passes to all disabled individuals. She thought it was concluded that the Committee was just going to focus on the issue of bus passes for the blind. Ms. Williams felt the Committee had not come to a consensus, thus the decision to respond back to Council as indicated above. Ms. Street suggested that if Ms. MacDonald can locate wording in the minutes to support her contention, she let Ms. Williams know, otherwise Ms. Williams should continue to draft the letter as proposed above.

4.5 TIMBERLEA AREA SIGN - HEARING IMPAIRED PERSON

Ms. MacDonald explained that deaf individuals in the community are upset with the sign cautioning motorists that there are "hearing impaired" individuals in the vicinity. They feel a sign indicating "deaf" individuals is preferable and would like the sign changed. A discussion followed on why some signs indicate 'deaf' while other indicate 'hearing impaired'. It was suggested that some of the signs might be provincial versus municipal.

Ms. Williams will raise with staff and suggest that maybe the policy needs updating. It was

proposed a letter be written to Mr. McCusker, copy to Mr. Kevin MacEachern, requesting a change in terminology be considered as the wording 'hearing impaired' is offensive to some individuals. The letter could suggest the Society of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing may be able to advise on the appropriate wording.

4.6 INTERPRETERS

Mr. Venus observed that there has not been much signing for Regional Council meetings since September. Ms. MacDonald noted that the problem is not funding, but finding available interpreters. She has been discussing the situation with the Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, emphasizing the importance of having a team(s) of interpreters to work on the broadcast, so they can share the workload, as the work is so intensive.

It was suggested that an alternative may be closed captioning. Mr. Hindle suggested that the Committee should make enquiries about this option. Ms. Brown proposed that voice print would also be beneficial for the blind and visually impaired. The members did not know whether these were affordable. It was noted that the broadcast of Council is done by East Link and they have difficulty finding volunteers to run their cameras. Referring to the difficulty in identifying individuals to man the cameras, it was suggested that if the community college(s), which run Screen Art programs, were made aware of this opportunity, to gain experience, this problem could be resolved. The members were cautioned that they need to be realistic in the demands they make of East Link.

Ms. Williams referred to this function being the responsibility of the Clerks Office. Ms. MacDonald asked the Committee if they wished her to contact Ms. Deborah Storey, Shared Services on behalf of the Committee. The members agreed. Councillor Meade recalled discussions earlier in the year about the need for an interpreter at the New Years Eve event on the Grand Parade. Ms. Williams recalled a letter being sent to the Special Events Coordinator(s) and a response indicating no funds had been budgeted for this purpose.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 OMG ATLANTIC - SIDEWALK RECEPTACLES

Item deferred. The Clerk was asked to provide Councillor Meade with the background materials.

5.2 DESIGN GUIDELINES - CITY OF LONDON, ONT. ETC.

Two sets of unsolicited Design Guidelines had been received. Due to the size of the documents, the Clerk circulated them to the members. Individuals wanting their own copy

could obtain through the Clerk.

5.3 ACCESSIBLE GAS STATIONS

Ms. Brown had raised the issue at the previous meeting. She referred to a newspaper article on the difficulty of finding accessible gas stations as more and more of them become self-serve. This presents a real problem for the chemically sensitive and those in wheelchairs.

Ms. Williams explained that the Municipality has no influence on the design of service stations. The petroleum industry sets the guidelines. Mr. Hindle suggested that the provincial Utility and Review Board might be the place to raise this concern.

5.4 ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUNDS

Councillor Meade proposed a motion for Regional Council requesting HRM Recreation Department draft recommendations for construction of new accessible playgrounds within HRM. At present there are no standards in Canada regarding their provision. He felt it important that guidelines be put in place for accessible playgrounds in HRM.

MOVED BY Councillor Meade and seconded by Ms. Brown that Regional Council request that the Recreation Department draft recommendations for the construction of new accessible playgrounds. MOTION PUT AND CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

5.5 SMOKING BY-LAW

Ms. Reynolds noted that a Public Hearing is being held tomorrow night at Council related to a proposed repealing of By-law S-200, as the Province is planning on adopting its own legislation. She proposed that the Committee write Regional Council asking them not only to continue with their Smoking By-law, S-200, but ask them to phase out smoking in all public places to protect workers and the public.

MOVED BY Ms. Reynolds, seconded by Ms. Brown that the Committee ask Regional Council not only to continue with their Smoking By-law S-200, but ask them to phase out smoking in all public places to protect workers and the public. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5.6 VIEW WINDOW - THEATERS

Ms. MacDonald alerted the members to an article which will be contained in tomorrow's newspaper about the Famous Player theatre, Spring Garden Road providing view windows for closed captioning. She explained to the members how it works and how wonderful it is for

those who can't hear. They are also providing headsets for the blind, so they can be provided with information on what is taking place on the screen.

5.7 FRED BUS

Mr. Venus questioned Mr. Hindle on whether the bus provided by the business community downtown is accessible. While it is low floor, it is not authorized for wheelchairs, Mr. Hindle advised.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was decided not to hold a December meeting. The next meeting will be January 20, 2002.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Before adjourning it was noted by Mr. Hindle that some of the members terms are up this month. Should they not be reappointed, he extended thanks on behalf of the Board for their participation and contributions to the Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk

