

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
MINUTES
MAY 26, 2003

PRESENT: Ms. Betty MacDonald, Chair
Ms. Jane Cale
Councillor Sarto
Councillor Meade
Ms. Peggy Brown
Ms. Elsie Cholette
Mr. Bob Venus
Ms. Barbara LeGay
Mr. Patrick Harrington
Ms. Maureen Reynolds

ABSENT: Mr. Donald Mullins (regrets)
Ms. Sally Campbell (regrets)
Ms. Cynthia Street (regrets)
Ms. Joanne Coffey
Ms. Anne Langille (regrets)
Supt. Cliff Falkenham (regrets)

ALSO PRESENT: Ms. Charla Williams, Diversity Program Coordinator
Mr. Kevin Hindle, Supervisor, Special Services, Metro Transit
Ms. Sandra Spears, Interpreter
Ms. Bonnie Lyn Barker, Interpreter
Ms. Lynne Le Boutillier, Legislative Assistant

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1. **CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 4:00 p.m., Finance Board Room, 3rd Floor, Duke Tower.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

MOVED BY Councillor Meade, seconded by Ms. Brown that the minutes of the March 17, 2003 meeting, be adopted as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Approval of the April 28th minutes was deferred until the June meeting, as brailled copies were only available at the meeting.

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

Item 5.1 - Sidewalk Cafes deferred (tabled) until the June meeting

Item 4.2 - Recruitment (Barb LeGay) - added

Item 5.8 - Letter of thanks to Council re snow removal initiatives and extra buses and operators.

Item 4.3 - Presentation(s) to Regional Council

The Secretary advised that she was asked by a member, who could not be present for today's meeting, to canvass the members on whether they would be interested in receiving information on the medicinal marijuana exemption. There was agreement that the information be provided, as it would be useful to have such information if the subject arose.

4. **NEW BUSINESS**

4.1 **HALIFAX ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING FAMILY SUPPORT**

C Letter dated April 10, 2003 from Halifax Association of Community Living Family Support

As an electronic version of the correspondence has yet to be received from the Association for brailling, the letter was read by the Secretary.

The letter referred to the recently released results of the Mainland Common Recreation Study. Concern was expressed that the survey did not contain one question that dealt with accessibility. Representatives of the organization would be available to discuss the matter with the Committee.

During the ensuing discussion on how to deal with the correspondence, the following points were raised:

- C It would be useful to see a copy of the survey.
- C A copy of the correspondence should be forwarded to the Director of Parks and Recreation for information, Mayor, members of Council and the CAO.
- C It may not be too late to address the concerns, given the facility has yet to be constructed.
- C Ms. Brown sat on the Planning Committee.
- C Invite representatives to a meeting to explain their concerns.
- C A copy of the survey should be readily available as it is a HRM document. Find out who coordinated the survey, before inviting Association representatives to a meeting.
- C Recreational facilities are not totally accessible in all instances, i.e. the Needham Centre where there is a ramp to the door, but no access to pool and gym. Only one level accessible. A level where none of the recreational facilities are provided.
- C Is the Association actually upset with the survey or the fact that facilities are unaccessible? What is it the Association actually wants the Committee to address?
- C Find out from the Paula Sheppard Thibeau, Family Support Facilitators what exacting they are looking for.
- C If this is a new facility, not yet built, the Committee could write a letter in support of having lifts installed and support staff provided.
- C Ms. Williams noted that the Building Code requires that new buildings be barrier free. She was confident these measures would be included in the design. She also noted that professional recreation staff has been providing inclusive services for more than a decade and are very conscious of services to be made available to all citizens.
- C The author of the letter be contacted, noting the Committee would like clarification of their concerns.
- C Obtain clarification and put on the June agenda.
- C Have the author, Paula Sheppard Thibeau, to the meeting and the Coordinator of Parks and Recreation, so the Coordinator could explain what Parks and Recreation are doing to include individuals with disabilities.

In conclusion, it was decided that the Chair should contact the Organization and decide after speaking with them if it would be appropriate to have Ms. Thibeau and Recreation staff to the June meeting.

4.2 **RECRUITMENT**

Ms. LeGay noted that there is a need for the Committee to consider recruitment, as a

number of members' terms will be up this year. The Committee may be facing a crisis situation this fall. Concern has been expressed in the past that the members don't represent a large enough range of disabilities.

She proposed there is a need to develop a recruitment strategy. She proposed that a sub-committee (sub-group) be struck to discuss how to recruit more aggressively.

During the discussion of this proposal, the following aspects were highlighted:

- C Current practices for advertising for new members to HRM Boards and Committees rely on newspaper ads. Such advertisements are of no use to the blind, those with reading challenges, chemical sensitivities, etc.
- C While the Committee does not have the authority to appoint members to the Committee, it has the authority and responsibility to generate interest in joining. Members can inform people of the process and how to get involved, but can't make a commitment that they will be appointed.
- C To facilitate this initiative, the importance of having the Clerks Office on side was stressed. Traditional methods don't work for recruiting.
- C Having Committee members on phone in shows, i.e. Radio Noon would help raise the awareness of the Committee and help with recruitment.
- C The benefit of having a back-up list of interested individuals, given the rule that after missing three consecutive meetings, individuals are no longer members of the Committee.
- C The importance of people with disabilities consider applying to other Boards, Committees and Commissions of HRM. By so doing, concerns of the disabled with be raised in other areas.
- C The need to raise the profile of the Committee within the disabled community.
- C The benefit of Committee representatives appearing before Regional Council, once or twice a year, to identify issues in the disabled community, i.e. the Mainland Common concerns discussed this evening;
- C Reference was made to next week being Access Awareness Week. A good opportunity to raise the Committee's profile.
- C Reference was also made to HRM having a radio news station, another avenue which could be used to get information out.

In conclusion, the sub-group consisting of the following was formed:

- C Barb LeGay
- C Patrick Harrington
- C Maureen Reynolds
- C Elsie Cholette
- C Joanne Coffey

The group will decide on a meeting time following the meeting or by phone.

4.3 ANNUAL/SEMI-ANNUAL PRESENTATION TO REGIONAL COUNCIL

Ms. Williams felt the Committee should be making at least an annual presentation to Regional Council.

She referred to the issues discussed at the meeting(s) and the need to make Council aware of them. She reflected that some fall within the HRM's jurisdiction, while others don't, but it was important to make Council aware of issues discussed, i.e. problems obtaining a taxi when accompanied by a guide dog; the lack of accessible taxis; the lack of housing for those who are environmentally sensitive and sidewalk cafes. She noted how effective the media has been in raising awareness of the latter problem. This information would help in educating people.

Councillor Meade felt presentations to the Committee of the Whole would be a good avenue, while Councillor Sarto felt presentations to Regional Council would be more desirable as the meetings are televised.

Referring to interviews and reports on the radio today, Mr. Harrington indicated he was appalled by comments made by HRM representatives.

Ms. Williams concluded that the Committee should plan on an annual or semi-annual presentation to Regional Council.

MOVED BY Mr. Harrington, seconded by Ms. Cholette that the Committee make a presentation to HRM Council and apprise them of the above noted issues, so that the Committee can build awareness. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Ms. Williams felt the timing of the presentation(s) will be important, for example October would be better than during the summer months.

It was agreed that the subject will be discussed at more length at the June meeting.

Referring to earlier comments related to items heard on the radio and using the HRM radio station to advertise for volunteers, the Chair pointed out that for the deaf this is not a viable form of communication.

5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES AND STATUS SHEET

5.1 **SIDEWALK CAFES**

Tabled to June meeting. Ms. Coffey attending a meeting with municipal staff and Mr. Rutt today.

5.2 **WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXIS**

It was recalled that the subject of Wheelchair Accessible Taxis was raised by Mr. Rutt, CPA, but due to time constraints he could not deal with it thoroughly at the April meeting. In the April meeting minutes he refers to getting parties together to address this problem. He felt the Committee would have a role in solving. In particular he noted not one wheelchair accessible taxi is available at the Halifax International Airport.

During the discussion, it became apparent that this item and 5.3, Access-A-Bus Subsidy (Accessible Taxi Subsidy) were linked as accessible transportation issues.

Reference was made to a Federal Program announced, but Mr. Hindle noted it does not relate to accessible taxis.

Mr. Harrington questioned how the Committee was going to response to Mr. Rutt's letter of February 14, 2003 to Councillor Adams.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- C A letter could be written to Mr. Rutt, CPA indicating the Committee's support, with copy to Regional Council.
- C Invite Mr. Rutt to attend another meeting to discuss further.
- C Reference was made to the joint meeting between the Taxi Committee and the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities and a request to the CAO about possible subsidies.
- C Reference was made to the ATAC (Accessible Taxi Advisory Committee) of which Council Meade is a member. Mr. Hindle noted they have put their concerns forward regarding the lack of accessible taxis in HRM. What happened to their concerns isn't known. The differences between the ATAC and the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities were pointed out. Primarily they related to the fact that the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities is appointed by Regional Council as an advisory committee to Council, whereas the ATAC isn't.
- C Reference was made to the issuance of new Taxi Licenses, not one of which was for an accessible taxi.
- C It was proposed that the two Councillor representatives make a motion at Regional Council for a staff report. Given Accessible Taxis are privately owned, it did not feel

- this strategy would provide results, i.e. the Taxi Committee can't be forced to tell ten (10) of the two hundred and ten (210) owners, to provide accessible taxi service.
- C One way around this would be to provide a subsidy to such license holders.
- Secondly, allow them to provide service to able bodied clients when their vehicle isn't required for persons with disabilities. With such a subsidy in place, individuals would not have to be forced to provide the service, they would chose to do so. It was noted that a larger vehicle could be used on other occasions to transport more passengers.
- C A municipality the size of HRM should be embarrassed not to have a means to transport wheelchair users from the Airport.
- C Referring to the operation of Accessible Taxis in the past, it was noted that they were only allowed to provide service to those with disabilities. What is needed is a means by which such operators could provide service to the able bodied, while providing priority service to those in wheelchairs.
- C Reference was made to Mr. Rutt's comment about the number of conferences lost to the area because appropriate transportation and hotel rooms are not available.
- C It was proposed that a petition be circulated on the issue.
- C It was felt that Mr. Rutt was looking to other groups involved with persons with disabilities to write letters of support.
- C There is not only a problem with travel in HRM but throughout the Province. TIANS could play an important role in the latter.
- C Reference was made to the operation and attitudes of the various Taxi Committees, both pre-amalgamation and post amalgamation.

In conclusion, it was decided to defer taking action on this matter until the June meeting, as Ms. Williams and Mr. Harrington will be meeting with Mr. Rutt tomorrow and will seek clarification on what his expectations are, ie. what he would like the Committee to do.

5.4 **TIMBERLEA AREA SIGN - CAUTION - HEARING IMPAIRED PERSON**

In her update, Ms. MacDonald indicated she has discussed the sign with the deaf person. The sign was supposed to be changed to refer to a 'deaf individual', but to date this has not been done. She is going to make a site visit and write a letter to area Councillor, Reg Rankin.

5.5 **HOUSING FOR THE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE**

A discussion followed on the status of the correspondence drafted by Ms. Reynolds for Regional Council, circulated at the September 2002 meeting. A supporting document from Dr. Fox, NS Environmental Health Centre has been received and was tabled with the Committee at the February meeting.

Ms. Reynolds referred to correspondence the Mayor had written to the Province. The members could not recall receiving a copy of his letter. As a result of this correspondence, there was a meeting with Mr. Dhillon. Ms. Reynolds was unable to attend, but she understood the outcome had been very positive, i.e. acknowledgment of the need for housing for the chemically sensitive. She noted that a number of groups are involved in this issue and perhaps the meeting referred to above was generated through a separate initiative.

Ms. Reynolds offered to contact Dr. Fox to confirm how the meeting went and what follow-ups resulted.

A brief review was conducted of the minutes and status sheet to determine the status of this item. It was noted that the item was first raised with the Committee at the September 2002 meeting. At the October meeting, the Committee indicated the report could be run by Councillor Sarto and on to Regional Council. The Chair will address with Mr. Connors, past Chair to determine if he forwarded the correspondence to Regional Council.

5.6 **TAXI ISSUES - SCENTS AND DOGS**

Ms. Brown relayed to the members problems she has encountered with scents in taxi cabs. She felt there is a need to bring attention to the need for enforcement of no scent/no smoking cabs.

Mr. Harrington recalled that a request can be made for a scent/smoking free cab. He felt if Ms. Brown had a complaint, she should direct it to the taxi company. He noted that Green Taxi have scent and smoke free cars.

Ms. Williams felt the complaint should be directed to the Taxi Committee. It is an issue they should consider. Contacting the taxi company does not necessarily address the issue.

Ms. Reynolds reflected that some people don't understand the whole spectrum of the issue, i.e. thinking deodorizers are okay. It is difficult to educate individuals on the range of scented products.

No decision was made on follow-up action.

Ms. LeGay updated the Committee on problems she and her husband have obtaining taxi service with their guide dogs.

In one instance she was successful in having a complaint dealt with which led to a suspension. She is currently pursuing another investigation. She noted that there was a

very positive meeting with the taxi industry a couple of years ago, but her experience indicates people are still refusing to take guide dogs. It is happening more frequently. She indicated the need for education and the posting and publishing of the names of drivers who are suspended and their license numbers.

Ms. Williams noted this is a matter which Ms. LeGay could take to the NS Human Rights Commission.

She felt the item could be removed from the Status Sheet. She will bring back to the Committee at a future time.

5.7 **CAPITAL DISTRICT TASK FORCE - URBAN DESIGN PROJECT**

Deferred to June meeting. More time was requested by Ms. Griffiths and Mr. Ratcliffe to confer with HRM staff about accessible curbcuts proposals.

5.3 **ACCESS-A-BUS (ACCESSIBLE TAXI) SUBSIDY**

A memo was circulated in the agenda package dated May 6, 2003 from Kevin Hindle, Supervisor, Special Services, Metro Transit Services. The correspondence refers to an extract from a joint Taxi & Limousine Committee and Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities meeting held December 17, 2001. Some confusion is reflected in the extract, given references to Access A Bus, should have read Accessible Taxi Service. He was requested to provide clarification to the Clerks Office.

The memo details improvements made to the Access-a-Bus service and re-alignments to the associated taxi service.

It did not address subsidies to privately operated Accessible Taxi Services.

5.8 **LETTER OF THANKS TO REGIONAL COUNCIL RE BUSES AND SNOW REMOVAL**

MOVED BY Mr. Venus, seconded by Councillor Sarto that the Committee write a letter of thanks and appreciation to Regional Council for the new bus(s) and operator(s) and for the program of snow removal for people with disabilities and seniors. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Chair will write the letter, after consulting with Mr. Connors.

6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held Monday, June 16, 2003, Training Room, 3rd Floor Duke Tower.

7. **STATUS SHEET**

Ms. Cale updated the members on progress made in developing a new format for the Status Sheet. She noted that the proposed format, resulting from discussions prior to the April meeting had not worked very well. A second format is being reviewed.

She noted that fifteen (15) minutes are set aside on the agenda to deal with Status Sheet items. She stressed the importance that this item be dealt with before meetings adjourn in future.

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Lynne Le Boutillier
Legislative Assistant