

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

MINUTES

OCTOBER 18, 2004

PRESENT:

Ms. Joanne Coffey, Vice-Chair
Councillor Meade
Councillor Sarto
Ms. Lynn DeMont
Mr. Patrick Harrington
Ms. Barbara LeGay
Mr. Warren Reed
Ms. Cathy Robertson
Ms. Ruth Szabo

ABSENT:

Ms. Peggy Brown (regrets)
Ms. Sally Campbell (regrets)
Ms. Joan Loveridge (regrets)
Ms. Betty MacDonald, Chair
Ms. Roxanne MacInnis, TDM Coordinator (regrets)
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police (regrets)

STAFF:

Ms. Charla Williams, Co-ordinator, Diversity Program
Mr. Paul Burgess, Design Engineer, Design and Construction
Services
Ms. Jana Delaney, Interpreter (left at 6:35 pm)
Ms. Karina Burris, Interpreter (left at 6:35 pm)
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The Vice-Chair called the meeting to order at 4:12 pm in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street.

The Committee agreed to have Item 4.1.2 All New Sidewalks Painted Blue moved forward on the agenda for immediate discussion.

4. **BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES**

4.1 **Status Sheet Items**

4.1.2 All New Sidewalks Painted Blue

- A staff report dated, September 17, 2004 was before the Committee.

Mr. Paul Burgess, Design Engineer, Design and Construction Services, presented the report.

Mr. Burgess distributed pictures and a textured sample of the tactile warning tile. He advised the tactile warning tiles are being installed on a trial basis and direction from this Committee or Regional Council would be required in order to make the commitment to install the tactile warning tiles at new intersections and to retrofit existing intersections. He encouraged the Committee to try out the intersections where the tiles are currently in place (Alderney Gate and Portland Street in Dartmouth) and provide any feedback to staff. He added this type of design does meet the guidelines of the *Americans with Disabilities Act*.

The Committee raised the following concerns:

- Will standard wheelchairs be able to manoeuvre over the raised portion of the tiles. *Mr. Burgess advised the tiles themselves are flush with the concrete with raised "bumps" on the tile surface.*
- \$800.00 to purchase and install the four tiles. Would the cost be lower if they were installed while concrete was being poured as opposed to installation after?

Mr. Burgess explained the cost quoted was based on four tiles going to one supplier. He added if the tactile warning tiles went out to tender there may be some variation in cost as there would be a number of suppliers to choose from and a higher quantity of product on order. Tiles are to be installed near Tower Road and Inglis Streets in Halifax in a few weeks (the concrete has to cure for at least 30 days before the tactile tiles can be added). Almon Street, Halifax, will have the tiles within the next two weeks. He further advised, staff is paying close attention to slopes in regards to curb cuts/pedestrian ramps. Many pedestrian ramps have a steep slope and with some you are unable to get over the curb. By using the tiles the

grade could be flattened a little but there has to be a visual or texturing contrast to warn of an upcoming intersection.

- ! Weather resistant? Will the product withstand the weather and snow removal?
- ! The tiles will line up with the crosswalk.
- ! Visual Contrast: the yellow of the tiles is a visual contrast in both day and night time although not the same as you would get with a traffic sign.
- ! The tiles could also be used to identify bus stops etc. Currently, they are placed in front of the CNIB building to get good feedback .

Ms. Williams commented Mr. Burgess and colleagues are to be commended as there are many things done by HRM for accessible issues and they do not always come to this Committee. She requested a copy of the report after the trial period ends this spring so the Committee can decide if we want to make a firm recommendation to Regional Council. Mr. Burgess advised staff will be having a conference with the Institute of Transportation Engineers and will present their “mistakes” and “efforts” to promote accessibility including the tactile warning tiles.

- ! Will there be public information to tell people what the tiles are for?
- ! People may find the tiles difficult to walk over. Possible falls/broken hips with the elderly.

Mr. Harrington explained with lower curb cuts the slope would be reduced. The “bumps” give a texture that is detectable underfoot.

- ! It is difficult to accommodate several disabilities with one solution. We have to find the balance. Slight inconveniences are okay until technology is improved.

2 APPROVAL OF NOTES - July 19, 2004

MOVED BY Councillor Meade, seconded by Ms. Barb LeGay that the Notes and all motions of July 19, 2004 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

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

Move: Item 4.1.2 All New Sidewalks Painted Blue to immediately following the Call to Order.

Addition: 8.2.7 Accessibility on Election Day

MOVED by Councillor Sarto, seconded by Ms. Lynn DeMont that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Status Sheet Items

4.1.1 Members of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities Presentation to the Regional Planning Committee.

Mr. Warren "Gus" Reed provided a brief update on the presentation. He advised that Ms. Coffey and Mr. Harrington were also in attendance at the presentation to explain the Seven Designs and why the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) would include the Universal Design in their strategies. He added the presentation was very well received by the RPC.

Mr. Reed added there had been a last minute change of venue which resulted in the meeting being held in an unaccessible building at the Ferry Terminal. Ms. Williams commented HRM should have alternative locations for meetings that are accessible and needs to do better in regards to providing accessible meeting locations.

The Committee raised the following concerns during the ensuing discussion:

- ! How can we communicate the importance of accessibility as part of the policy for major public meetings? Is there some way we can communicate that for Municipal meetings.
- ! There has to be discussion throughout the organization. If the larger rooms are booked, the meeting rooms may not be available. It is an organizational issue.
- ! Maybe there should have an elevator at that location.

The Legislative Assistant explained the Municipal Clerks office is searching for accessible meeting locations for larger groups. The issue was previously raised when this Committee was searching for a larger, accessible meeting room.

Ms. Coffey commented an e-mail from the RPC was received after the meeting apologizing for the inaccessible location. It is possible we may see something in relation to accessible meeting locations in RPC's final document regarding universal design.

4.1.2 All New Sidewalk Handicap Ramps Painted Blue

This item previously dealt with. See page 3. To remain on Status Sheet until Spring 2005.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS

5.1 HRM Noise By-Law - RE: Recent Notice Filed with Human Rights for Discrimination Based on Disability

- An e-mail response from Mr. Barry Allen, Municipal Solicitor, dated June 14, 2004, was before the Committee.
- A copy of the HRM Noise By-Law was previously distributed to the Committee.

MOVED BY Mr. Patrick Harrington, seconded by Councillor Condo Sarto that this item be deferred. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5.2 Workplan

Mr. Reed advised Dr. Lee Kirby, with the Nova Scotia Rehabilitation Centre, has designed a wheelchair challenge to assist youth in learning skills to manoeuvre in a wheelchair. Part of the “challenge” includes practice ramps, potholes, sloping sidewalks, curb cuts and other necessary skills to have. He suggested the wheelchair challenge course be incorporated in the accessible playgrounds to give kids in wheelchairs a chance to develop physical and useful skills as a playground is a chance for kids to be physical and test their limits and be independent. It is an educational process when kids use a playground. He further suggested this could be a project for the Committee’s Workplan. He suggested Dr. Kirby be invited to present at the next meeting.

The Committee raised the following concerns during the ensuing discussion:

- ! We have already endorsed the idea of accessible playgrounds.
- ! The accessible playgrounds were not intended just for children to play there but for the adults to be able to interact - if there were peastone gravel walkways a parent in a wheelchair could not manoeuvre that. The money is to make the playgrounds accessible for parents and children.
- ! This is a specific “recreation program or activity” and that is not in the mandate of this Committee. It should be forwarded on to the appropriate department.

Ms. Williams commented Warren’s idea is fascinating. Communities can come together and do things together. Some children in wheelchairs do not have areas where they can excel and this “challenge” would be great for them. It is an opportunity to have something like the skateboard parks but it would be for wheelchairs and the kids could feel included in the community. We could encourage HRM to support his type of activity. This is the kind of thing that could move HRM to a truly inclusive community.

- ! This Committee can endorse the idea to Recreation and accept the offer for a presentation.

- ! There may be other individuals doing something similar. Maybe HRM could explore the idea but we do not have the research capacity with this committee.
- ! Steps have already been taken for accessibility to parks and playgrounds.

The Legislative Assistant advised the mandate of this Committee, as outlined in the Terms of Reference, is: "*The main responsibility of the Committee is to advise Halifax Regional Municipal Council on the impact of Municipal policies, programs and services on persons with disabilities. 1.1 To facilitate the full participation of all citizens with disabilities in civic and community affairs by ensuring that policies, programs and service do not impose barriers to such participation...*" She agreed steps have been taken by this Committee to encourage/ensure playground accessibility and suggested this Committee forward the suggestion/recommendation for inclusion of a "Wheelchair Challenge Course", a specific program/activity, to the HRM Parks and Recreation Department for their consideration as a program offered by their department.

Ms. Williams commented HRM has accessibility and this is an opportunity to step outside the box. By knowing a little more about what the challenge is about we could go to staff and say do you know about this? Are you interested in this? This Committee could invite the Director of Parks and Recreation to the meeting and have Dr. Kirby make a presentation here.

- ! Issue of a workplan is the issue. Are we as a Committee supposed to have a workplan? Should someone put forward a plan? A list of possible issues that this committee could address would be helpful.
- ! There will be many new members on this Committee after November and a workplan would be beneficial to them. They could always add to it.

Ms. Charla Williams commented we need to check into the issue of a work plan as other Committees do not seem to have workplans. We have a report that goes to Regional Council that presents what we did as a Committee. Some of the issues discussed by this Committee are Provincial or Federal issues and we have no jurisdiction there. I do not think we need a workplan.

The Legislative Assistant read the two sections of the Committee's Terms of Reference referring to the report to Regional Council and workplan:

7. MEETINGS (page 3)

- 7.1 *The Committee shall meet no less than four times per year. The Council will provide Municipal Clerk resources for all regular and special meetings and **additional support will be subject to the approved and/or revised work plans of the committee** where the number of meetings and resources required are to be identified.*

13. REPORT TO COUNCIL (page 4)

13.1 *The Committee shall submit a report of activities to Council during the first quarter of each year.*

Councillor Meade advised the first quarter is January to March.

MOVED BY Ms. Barb LeGay, seconded by Mr. Patrick Harrington that the annual report to Regional Council include a list of proposed activities for the upcoming year and a workplan as required by the Terms of Reference. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5.3 Full Service Gas Pumps

MOVED BY Councillor Gary Meade, seconded by Mr. Patrick Harrington that this item be deferred until Ms. Peggy Brown is available to provide an update. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5.4 Buskers on Street Corners

An e-mail response dated July 15, 2004 was before the Committee.

Ms. Barb LeGay advised this item could be removed as a response has been received.

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS - None

7. REPORTS

7.1.1 Building Code Sub-Committee

Ms. Joanne Coffey advised the report on the meeting with Mr. Glen LaLacheur and Sally Campbell was included in the package. She advised the Sub-Committee strongly recommended changing accessible housing from 5% to 10%. She advised the recommendation will now go to the Building Code Advisory Committee and then to the province and Regional Council. The recommendation will then have to go to the Minister of Housing to be made "law".

8. ADDED ITEMS/NEW BUSINESS

8.1 Added Items

8.1.1 Accessibility Issues on Election Day - Mr. Patrick Harrington/Ms. Barb LeGay

Ms. Barb LeGay commented there was confusion on Election Day regarding the use/availability of templates for the blind. She advised the Committee that:

- ! Voters who were blind were told at a north end Halifax polling station that their “friend” could mark the ballot for them.
- ! A voter who was blind asked for a template but the election workers did not know what she meant. A template was eventually found.
- ! The voters who were blind who did get a template were told that they still had to be sworn in before voting.
- ! One person asked to have the template read to her at the poll and was told by the workers that they could not do that.
- ! Polling Station at Roosevelt Street, a template was requested but none was found.
- ! **Lack of consistency as some voters who were blind had to have their escort sworn in and some did not.** Concern is more regarding those who were not sworn in who should have been. Ms. Charla Williams advised that some people may still have had to be sworn in if they were not on the list.
- ! No training provided for some election workers and *adequate* training was not provided.
- ! Problem on template on Sunday shopping, the X spots did not line up with the holes.

The Committee suggested the complaints be brought to the attention of the Returning Officer, Ms. Jan Gibson.

Ms. Charla Williams commented she was a Poll Station Supervisor during the October 16th Municipal Election and can confirm training was provided to the volunteers on the use of the templates. She added a template was given to each Supervisor and there was only one template per Polling Station. She further advised no one at her poll requested the template. Ms. Williams added the inconsistency of service received is not acceptable and agreed the Returning Officer should be notified. She added this Committee could suggest that election volunteers be better trained.

Councillor Meade commented many people had problems on election day and some volunteers were hired on the Friday night to replace a worker. Ms. Williams agreed that some people who said they would volunteer for the election did not show up so people were called in at the last minute.

Ms. Williams commented that Ms. Barb LeGay should contact Ms. Jan Gibson with her concerns. She added any recommendations for change to the regulations would have to go to the Province.

MOVED BY Ms. Barb LeGay, seconded by Ms. Lynn DeMont that the Returning Officer respond to the inconsistencies experienced at the polls. Further that the Returning Officer respond to the concerns raised by the blind/visually impaired voters on who was/was not required to be sworn in.

Councillor Sarto suggested that the polling station where the incidents occurred be referred to in the request to staff. The Committee commented the exact polling station was not necessary as the issue was inconsistency overall and lack of training of the election volunteers.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

8.2 New Business

8.2.1 Membership

The Legislative Assistant reviewed the membership requirements indicating seven (7) terms would be expiring this November. She further advised of an additional two vacancies for terms expiring in November 2005 for a total of nine (9) upcoming vacancies. Further, there would be three current members who would be ineligible to reapply as the Terms of Reference for this Committee states members can only serve for three consecutive terms.

The Committee expressed concern with the recent and ongoing problem in achieving quorum at their meetings. A suggestion was made to reduce the total composition of the Committee to reduce quorum requirements. Following a brief discussion on this issue, the following motion was made:

MOVED BY Mr. Patrick Harrington, seconded by xxx that the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities recommend Regional Council amend the Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities to reduce membership requirements from a minimum of fifteen (15) citizens and two (2) Regional Councillors to a minimum of eight (8) citizens and two (2) Regional Councillors.

Ms. Charla Williams clarified that additional members could be appointed to the Committee as the Terms of Reference would continue to indicate a minimum number of residents to be appointed. Councillor Meade advised other HRM Boards and Committees are looking for persons with disabilities to serve and encouraged those who would not be returning to consider applying for service on other HRM Board or Committees. Also, that other persons with disabilities be encouraged to apply to serve on HRM Boards and Committees.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

8.2.2 Active Transportation - *Roxane MacInnis*

Deferred to next meeting due to time constraints.

8.2.3 Accessible Travel Routes - *Roxane MacInnis*

Deferred to next meeting due to time constraints.

8.2.4 No Interpreters at Mayoral Candidate Forum - *Ms. Betty MacDonald*

Deferred to next meeting due to time constraints.

8.2.5 Playground - *Mr. Warren Reed*

Deferred to next meeting due to time constraints.

8.2.6 Proposed Meeting Schedule for 2005

Deferred to next meeting due to time constraints.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

The Committee thanked Councillor Sarto for his assistance over the years and wished him well on his retirement. Councillor Sarto commented his experience on this Committee has made him more aware of the disabled community. He added it would be good for all Councillors to sit on this Committee at some time or another.

The next meeting will be on **Monday, November 15, 2004** at 4:00 pm in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 pm.

Chris Newson
Legislative Assistant