

# HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

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## ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES

April 20, 2009

PRESENT: Ms. Helen McFadyen, Chair  
Councillor Mary Wile  
Councillor Jerry Blumenthal  
Mr. Tom Boyd  
Mr. Gary Russell  
Ms. Mary Newcombe  
Ms. Johanne Caron

REGRETS: Ms. Joanne Coffey  
Ms. Mildred Colburn  
Mr. Kevin Peppard

STAFF: Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant  
Mr. Phil Townsend, Acting Director of Infrastructure and Asset  
Management  
Ms. Shawnee Gregory, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - March 16, 2009**

Ms. Newcombe clarified that she had requested her agenda package by email rather than regular mail.

Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, updated the Committee on the Spryfield Arena; noting that it was still under the management of the Lion's Club while HRM looked for a new community partner.

**MOVED by Councillor Wile, seconded by Mr. Boyd, that the minutes of March 16, 2009 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS - ADDITIONS/DELETIONS**

**MOVED BY Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Mr. Russell, that item 6.3.1 be dealt with prior to item 4.1. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**6.3.1 Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians - Discontinued Free Bus Passes by Metro Transit**

C Correspondence dated February 16, 2009 from the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians was before the Committee.

Mr. Jeff Overmars, spoke on behalf of the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians. He advised that the unemployment rate among blind residents of HRM was 70%; noting that many of these residents could not afford the added expense of a bus pass. He stated that Metro Transit should keep in mind when deciding to rescind the pass that, on occasion, Metro Transit drivers did not call out stops even when asked to do so and that bus schedules were not accessible for those with visual impairments as they were not in pdf format online nor were they available in braille

Ms. Caron entered the meeting at 4:19 p.m.

It was noted that approximately 300 to 500 free passes were issued every 3 or 4 years by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), however, it was difficult to know how many in total were in use.

The Chair indicated that upon hearing Mr. Overmar's points regarding Metro Transit's lack of resources for the blind; her suggestion would be to extend the passes until a new agreement could be reached. She also stated that a new manner of controlling the passes may be

required as several Committee members were concerned that they were being given to sighted friends and family members by those who did not use the pass themselves.

Mr. Overmars advised that the pass holder was required to show their CNIB photo ID along with their free transit pass when getting on a bus.

The Chair thanked Mr. Overmars for his presentation and requested that he submit an electronic file of his speech to the Legislative Assistant for the record. She advised that all Committee members would receive an electronic copy as well.

Mr. Overmars left the meeting and a discussion ensued. It was noted that this was a timely issue as the passes expired in June of 2009.

Councillor Blumenthal noted that if Metro Transit was taking away the free passes they should solve the resource issues as a compromise.

It was noted that in Vancouver while residents did not receive a free pass they did receive quality, equitable service complete with audible announcements.

Mr. Russell noted that the free pass was causing a problem with other groups with disabilities as they were not extended the same privilege even though many of them were on fixed incomes as well.

Mr. Rutt stated that it may be helpful to have further background information regarding what transit services other Canadian municipalities had for the blind in order to make an informed decision. Mr. Rutt noted that all sides should have their say in the form of a staff report.

**MOVED BY Ms. Newcombe, seconded by Ms. Caron, that the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities recommend that Halifax Regional Council defer rescinding the Metro Transit free bus pass for the blind pending more information via a staff report and that the pass be extended until such time as a decision can be made. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

It was noted that Mr. Russell voted against the motion.

Councillors Blumenthal and Wile noted that, if the recommendation went to Council, they would also request that the staff report include information regarding transit for the blind in other Canadian cities.

#### **4. BUSINESS ARISING:**

##### **4.1 Meeting Date/Time**

The Chair advised that there were still some issues remaining around the optimal time for the Committee to meet.

Ms. Caron advised that she normally worked until 5:00 p.m., however, her employer was okay with her leaving at 4:00 p.m. once a month. She noted that she would not be able to attend the meeting if it took place earlier than 4:00 p.m.

The Committee agreed to continue meeting on the third Monday of the month at 4:00 p.m.

Councillor Wile noted that she had another meeting at 6:00 p.m. on that date, however, she would manage her time depending on the agenda items for each commitment.

The Chair advised that she would move the most urgent items to the top of the agenda to accommodate Councillor Wile.

As the May meeting fell on the Victoria Day holiday, the Committee agreed to tentatively set a meeting date of May 11, 2009.

#### **4.2 Active Transportation Advisory Committee - ACPD Representation**

The Chair advised that she had attended the first Active Transportation Advisory Committee meeting and that they had not yet selected a regular meeting date or time. She stated that they were a Committee that needed representation from the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities as they would be dealing with many issues which could use ACPD members' assistance. The Chair advised members to feel free to volunteer as it was important to have participation.

The Legislative Assistant will inform the Chair when a regular meeting date is set.

#### **4.3 Status Report - Disbursement of Accessibility Funds**

The Chair advised new members that in 2008 HRM had allocated \$200,000 to make HRM owned sites more accessible; noting that the Committee was being consulted on how the money would be spent. She stated that the Committee put several recommendations forward in 2008 which Mr. Phil Townsend, Acting Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, then brought to Regional Council. The Chair advised that Mr. Townsend was in attendance to update the Committee on what funds were still available and what projects were underway.

Mr. Townsend advised that not all recommendations required Council approval if they were for small scale projects. He stated that one project that had recently been completed was the installation of a Nolan Lift in the pool at Cole Harbour Place at a cost of approximately \$8000. He indicated that the Committee would probably be hearing requests for additional lifts at other sites as a result. Mr. Townsend also informed the Committee that the Creighton Community Centre had been given an accessible ramp at a cost of approximately \$17,000 and the Sackville Sports Stadium had been given \$6000 to carry out their adaptation for an accessible washroom.

Councillor Blumenthal requested that the Needham Centre Pool be made more accessible via ramps. Mr. Townsend advised that this may be challenging as the site was designed in a manner that would not accommodate such changes. He also stated that Mr. John Henry,

Coordinator of Aquatic Services, would be the main contact on such requests and would be able to provide information as to what sites would benefit from the installation of Nolan Lifts.

The Chair requested that Mr. Henry be invited to a meeting to discuss such matters.

Mr. Townsend advised that he would follow up on any additional projects that the Committee had requested in 2008 including the service dog park. This park will be located on the existing parcel of land near the Rainey Drive and Cogswell Street interchange. Mr. Townsend advised that while this park would not solely be dedicated to service dogs it would have signage requesting that sighted owners please yield to service dogs and their owners.

Mr. Townsend advised that there was approximately \$116,000 left to fund additional projects; \$75,000 after the park was implemented. He stated that \$200,000 would be granted each year for accessibility projects under the HRM five year plan and noted that he had received some direct requests now that people knew that funds were available. He indicated that approximately \$95,000 worth of requests had been brought forward by staff so far for sites including Acadia School, the Captain William Spry Centre, the Lions Rink and the Fairbanks Centre.

It was noted that the Chair and Mr. Townsend would investigate any additional requests from 2008 that may have been overlooked. These requests include:

- C Audible signals at all ferry terminals, including Woodside;
- C Accessible washrooms at Point Pleasant Park;
- C A door opener for the interior parkade at Alderney Landing;
- C Outdoor pool lifts in Bedford and the Halifax Common;
- C Accessible washrooms for the Dartmouth Ferry Terminal.

#### **4.4 Taxi and Limousine Driver's Industry Guide**

- C A copy of the Important Information for Taxi Drivers in HRM About Passengers with Disabilities guide was before the Committee.

The Chair advised that she and Ms. Coffey had prepared the Important Information for Taxi Drivers in HRM About Passengers with Disabilities guide. She advised that Councillor Wile had brought one item to her attention which would require rephrasing and welcomed any additional comments. She noted that it was her intention to present the guide to the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee

The Committee agreed that the guide was well done.

It was unknown, at this time, as to how the information would be distributed to the taxi and limousine industry.

**MOVED BY Councillor Wile, seconded by Ms. Newcombe, that the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities endorse the Important Information for Taxi Drivers in HRM About Passengers with Disabilities guide and that it be forwarded to**

the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee for their consideration. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**5. DEFERRED BUSINESS - NONE**

**6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS**

**6.1 Correspondence - None**

**6.2 Petitions- None**

**6.3 Presentations**

**6.3.1 Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians - Discontinued Free Bus Passes by Metro Transit**

This item was dealt with earlier in the meeting. Please see page 3.

**7. REPORTS - NONE**

**8. ADDED ITEMS - NONE**

**9. NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next meeting was scheduled for May 11, 2009.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

Shawnee Gregory  
Legislative Assistant