

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES

May 11, 2009

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

REGRETS: Ms. Joanne Coffey
Mr. Gary Russell
Mr. Kevin Peppard
Ms. Mildred Colburn
Councillor Mary Wile

STAFF: Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, Human Resources
Mr. Phil Townsend, Acting Director of Infrastructure and Asset
Management
Superintendent Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Ms. Lori Patterson, Manager Public Affairs, Metro Transit
Mr. Randolph Kinghorne, Solicitor, Legal Services
Ms. Melody Campbell, Legislative Assistant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CALL TO ORDER	3
2.	APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES	3
3.	APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS - ADDITIONS/DELETIONS	3
4.	BUSINESS ARISING	
4.1	Alliance for Equality of Blind Persons - Discontinued Free Bus Passes by Metro Transit - Staff Report	4
4.2	Update on Accessibility Funds	4
4.3	Clean Nova Scotia's proposal to Council RE pilot project to allow more small and fuel efficient vehicles in the taxi industry	5
4.4	Appointment to Active Transportation Advisory Committee	5
5.	DEFERRED BUSINESS	5
6.	CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS	
6.1	Correspondence	
6.1.1	Letter - April 20, 2009 from Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians	5
6.1.2	E-mail dated May 1, 2009 RE: Proposed Service Dog Park Site - Cogswell/Rainnie	5
6.2	Petitions	6
6.3	Presentations	6
7.	REPORTS	6
8.	ADDED ITEMS	6
9.	NEXT MEETING DATE	6
10.	ADJOURNMENT	6

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - April 20, 2009

Mr. Townsend noted that under 4.3 Status Report - Disbursement of Accessibility Funds, the word "lift" be added to the item regarding outdoor pools in Bedford and the Halifax Common.

The minutes of April 20, 2009 were not approved due to lack of quorum.

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

4. BUSINESS ARISING:

4.1 Alliance for Equality of Blind Persons - Discontinued Free Bus Passes by Metro Transit - Staff Report

- A staff report dated May 9, 2009 was before the Committee.

Mr. Lori Patterson, Manager of Public Affairs, Metro Transit provided a staff report and addressed the Committee on the status of the free bus passes for the Alliance for Equality of Blind Persons.

Mr. Boyd questioned how the numbers noted in the report indicating 500 passes totalling a cost of \$360,000 was arrived at. Ms. Patterson advised that the number of \$360,000 was an approximate value of the 500 passes used daily.

Ms. Patterson advised that the decision to discontinue the free passes was based on equity adding that it is unfair to benefit one group over another.

Councillor Blumenthal advised that Metro Transit has not implemented the services such as large fonts, yellow colour signage and bus stop initiation. He added that the passes should not be discontinued until these initiatives are in place.

Mr. Boyd assumed the Chair at 4:20 p.m.

Ms. McFadyen stated that Metro Transit needs to provide accessible information to the blind, such as accessible bus stops, accessible bus schedules on the website, bus stops be tagged in yellow, and bus stop initiation. She noted that bus drivers, when requested, often do not announce stops. Ms. McFadyen advised that further discussion needs to take place on this issue. She suggested a rate reduction be put in place for the disabled. Ms. Patterson advised that Metro Transit needs to be fair to all user groups. She advised that it would be

very difficult to determine who could qualify for reduced rates, as all disabilities cannot be determined. It was noted that HRM does not have access to Revenue Canada information to determine those with disabilities due to privacy issues.

Ms. McFadyen suggested a task force be commissioned to determine the means to identify a rate reduction for the disabled.

Mr. McFadyen assumed the Chair at 4:35 p.m.

Ms. Patterson advised the Committee that many of the projects and improvements by Metro Transit are determined in the budget process. She added that Metro Transit continues to work on processes to make the service more accessible.

Mr. Boyd stated that many other cities have solved this problem by reducing rates for the disabled.

Ms. McFadyen added that the bus service is inequitable to the blind in particular, and she added this is the reason for the resistance to the elimination of the free bus pass.

Ms. Johanne Caron suggested that Metro Transit utilize a grandfathering clause for existing bus pass users. Mr. Kinghorne, Solicitor, indicated that many will not consider that this is fair to all transit users.

The Committee agreed that the bus pass issue needs an extension to discuss equitable solutions. It was noted that the free bus pass extension expires the end of June 2009. The Committee agreed to request a three month extension be forwarded to Metro Transit.

4.2 Update on Accessibility Funds

Mr. Phil Townsend, Acting Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provided an update on projects utilizing the accessibility funding to the Committee. The following projects were noted:

- Work at the Bowles Arena is in process
- Cole Harbour swimming pools are complete
- There is no action to date at the Spryfield Lions Arena
- The service dog run is very close to completion
- Staff are waiting for costs on the Needham Pool
- The Sackville Sport Stadium washrooms are complete
- A number of pool issues are outstanding

It was advised that Mr. John Henry be requested to attend a future meeting of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities to discuss pool lifts.

Ms. McFadyen raised concern that the fencing at the dog service run is only four feet high.

Discussion ensued on accessibility issues at the ferry terminals with the following issues being brought forward:

- The Halifax Ferry Terminal washrooms are wheelchair accessible although work needs to be done such as door openers and lower soap dispensers. It was noted that the accessible washroom door opens the wrong way.
- The accessible washroom at the Dartmouth Ferry Terminal needs work and it was noted that the regular washrooms are not accessible.
- The Woodside Ferry Terminal washrooms need work and staff will get pricing on door operators.

Mr. Townsend addressed further work on accessibility projects:

- Staff will proceed with the work on the washrooms at Point Pleasant Park and it was noted that it will cost approximately \$20,000 to have them complete.
- The parkade at Alderney has accessibility issues. Ms. McFadyen will look into this further and advise Mr. Townsend.

Mr. Townsend advised the Committee that once the budget is approved, accessibility funding will be determined for the upcoming year.

4.3 Clean Nova Scotia's proposal to Council RE pilot project to allow more small and fuel efficient vehicles in the taxi industry

Ms. McFadyen advised that she has been in contact with Mr. Kevin Hindle, HRM, regarding fuel efficient vehicles in HRM. Mr. Hindle has requested the Committee provide feedback to staff advising of accessibility issues in regard to this initiative.

Mr. Laughie Rutt, Diversity Consultant, advised that Mr. Hindle attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the issues relating to small, fuel efficient vehicles and accessibility.

4.4 Appointment to Active Transportation Advisory Committee

Ms. McFadyen advised that she will continue to attend the Active Transportation Advisory Committee until a representative is chosen by the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities.

This item will be addressed at the next meeting.

5. DEFERRED BUSINESS: None

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

6.1 Correspondence:

6.1.1 Letter - April 20, 2009 from Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians

- A letter dated April 20, 2009 from the Alliance of Equality of Blind Canadians was before the Committee.

This item was addressed during Item 4.1.

6.1.2 E-mail dated May 1, 2009 RE: Proposed Service Dog Park Site - Cogswell/Rainnie

- An E-mail dated May 1, 2009 regarding a proposed Service Dog Park Site at Cogswell/Rainnie was before the Committee.

Ms. McFadyen advised that she has met with Mr. Kevin Conley, Senior Parks Planner, and Ms. Deanna Wilmshurst, Public Affairs Coordinator regarding the service dog park site. She advised that she and Ms. Wilmhurst discussed the implementation of a campaign to advise the public of the park opening.

Ms. McFadyen advised the Committee that the dog park site is almost complete, although she raised a concern that the fence surrounding the park is only four feet high.

6.2 Petitions: None

6.3 Presentations: None

7. REPORTS: None

8. ADDED ITEMS

9. NEXT MEETING DATE: June 15, 2009

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

Melody Campbell
Legislative Assistant