

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES  
MINUTES**

**May 26, 2008**

**PRESENT:** Ms. Helen McFadyen, Chair  
Ms. Joanne Coffey  
Ms. Rebecca King  
Mr. Alan Farquhar  
Councillor Mary Wile  
Mr. Tom Boyd  
Mr. Gary Russell, Vice-Chair  
Ms. Mary Newcombe  
Ms. Sanaz Gerami

**REGRETS:** Councillor Patrick Murphy

**STAFF:** Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant  
Cliff Falkenham, Superintendent - Patrol Division (HRP)  
Ms. Sandra T. Riley, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 4:06 pm by Ms. Helen McFadyen, Chair, in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

**2. INTRODUCTIONS**

Ms. McFadyen asked members of the Committee to identify him/herself audibly for clarification on the record.

The Chair thanked Councillor Wile for presenting the report on Hybrid Automobiles to Council, and to Mr. Tom Boyd and Ms. Joanne Coffey for attending to be the Committee's representative as she had prior engagements.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES -None**

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

**Additions:**

9.1 Partnership for Access Awareness Week - Laughlin Rutt

8.2 Alan Farquhar - update - Dal Study on Accessibility (Kids With Disabilities)

**MOVED BY Ms. Newcombe, seconded by Mr. Farquhar, that the order of business be approved, as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED**

**5. REPORTS**

**5.1 Ms. Jen Powley - Accessible Taxi Service Study**

Ms. Jen Powley introduced herself as a Planning student at Dalhousie University. She advised that one of her final projects for university was an independent study for options for accessible taxi service. She circulated a handout dated 07 December 2007, with the title, "Accessible Taxi Service: Investigating feasible options for Halifax Regional Municipality", with the following subsections:

- Revamping Halifax Regional Municipality's existing system
- Overhauling the System

- Tools for Getting There
- Other Considerations
- Recommendations

She advised that nearly every city across Canada has the same struggle with accessibility. She stated that she did a survey on 22 cities across Canada with receipt of 16% back from the mail out. She advised that she had spoken to Municipal Councillors, the Mayor, Access-a-Bus, the Taxi Commission, as well as present and past agencies/persons who had delivered successful taxi service.

Ms. Powell advised that she found fifteen separate solutions that were implemented somewhere or were possible, as follows:

1. Municipality purchases accessible vehicles and leases them to taxi broker
2. Priority licensing for accessible taxis
3. Ability to convert accessible license to "regular"
4. Allow taxi drivers to add a surcharge for an accessible van request
5. Operational support for accessible taxis
6. Guaranteed contracts for accessible taxis
7. Establish an accessible fleet by awarding a contract following a Request For Proposals (RFP)
8. Eliminate door-to-door transit
9. Use transit system to provide "taxi" service
10. Provide door-to-door transit operation with enough funding to provide on-demand service
11. Increase fares
12. Subsidy to offset purchase price of accessible vehicle
13. Offer subsidies to users
14. Explore funding from the federal government
15. Require taxi industry to support accessible taxis

Ms. Powley advised she then evaluated the fifteen solutions on seven separate criteria:

1. Cost to government
2. Satisfies needs of persons with disabilities
3. Impact on existing accessible taxi operators and industry
4. Fare equality
5. Superficial v. Robust equality
6. Lasting solution
7. Immediate relief

Ms. Powell gave a detailed discussion of the handout and then took questions for clarification from the Committee with the following concerns and issues:

- Taxis in the HRM are privately owned

- Persons with disabilities are charged more for taxi rides
- A challenge has to be made to Human Rights regarding fare equality
- There is a cap on the number of licenses available; 10-year waiting list
- Accessible cabs offer a priority for license
- Standard accessible taxis have ramped entry to the side and are modified; because they are modified and not crash-tested in Canada, they cannot be used here. American producers are reluctant to produce cabs based on Canadian standards.
- Taxi By-laws should be rewritten to decide a percentage of accessible taxis
- Power chairs/scooters are being built wider and some do not fit cabs or even Metro Transit
- Nova Scotia has a higher proportion than average of people with disabilities across the nation; 14% of population is disabled
- Simulations of a day in the life of a disabled person - empathy training
- Mis-perceptions that persons with disabilities have less than good lives
- HRM's Cultural Policy Section 2.10
- Mayor committed to establishing a Task Force on this issue

Councillor Wile has agreed to enquire into the status of the Task Force the Mayor has committed to, and report back to the Committee for the next meeting of June 16, 2008.

Ms. MacFadyen, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Ms. Powley and her assistant, Heather, for coming and sharing this information.

## **5.2 Recommendation for re-appointment of Mr. Gary Russell to the Cultural Advisory Committee**

Mr. Russell advised that his appointment to the Cultural Advisory Committee (CAC) would expire in July so someone would have to be appointed to represent the Advisory Committee for Persons With Disabilities (ACPD).

As there were no other nominees, Mr. Russell agreed to be re-appointed to the CAC as representative from ACPD. He gave the Committee a brief overview of when and why the CAC was formed. It was agreed that Mr. Russell would write a report for the Committee to keep them up to date on what is happening in the CAC.

**MOVED by Mr. Farquhar, seconded by Mr. Boyd, that Mr. Gary Russell be re-appointed to the Cultural Advisory Committee as the representative for the Advisory Committee for Persons With Disabilities. MOTION PUT AND PASSED**

## **6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS**

### **6.1 Curb Cuts - (Update)**

Mr. Boyd enquired again as to whether it was now policy to have curb cuts at certain degrees

on street corners, stating that he had not received an answer as of yet from Mr. Gordon Hayward. He mentioned that Councillor Murphy had agreed to contact the appropriate persons on clearing the sidewalks on Almon Street, between Windsor and Robie streets.

It was decided that the Chair would send a note to both Mr. Hayward and Councillor Murphy regarding these issues.

Mr. Russell advised that the Committee still needed to contact Mr. David Hubley, Manager, Design & Construction - Infrastructure & Asset Management- again regarding a platform that was supposed to be built outside the Professional Building. He advised that this platform has not been built yet. The Chair advised that she would check on this concern.

## **7. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS**

### **7.1 Report to Council/Mayor - Hybrid Automobiles**

The Chair thanked Councillor Wile, Mr. Boyd and Ms. Coffey for their assistance with this matter when the meeting was called to order.

## **8. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES**

### **8.1 Accessible Low Floor (ALF) Buses - Questionnaire and Results**

Ms. McFadyen gave a brief update on the circulated handouts, advising that Mr. Todd Hacquoil had provided them for the Committee. Mr. Hacquoil provided surveys done in cooperation with Metro Transit entitled "Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) Accessible Services Questionnaire" and another handout with the 'results' of said survey.

The Committee had many comments, particularly on the Appendixes C, D, & E, which were comments from the users and potential users of the ALF. Ms. McFadyen advised that she would send correspondence to Mr. Hacquoil and to Ms. Lori Patterson, Manager, Public Affairs, Metro Transit, to respond to the question put forward by Ms. Newcombe as to what Metro Transit is doing about the comments made in the survey and to garner their reactions to it.

Mr. Russell advised that the report went to Ms. Patterson last month and complaints were forwarded to the '4000' phone number and that the operators were informing callers that they do not take complaints regarding accessible buses. He advised that this has now been straightened out.

Ms. McFadyen advised the Committee that these surveys will be done on a yearly basis, to which Mr. Rutt requested she have Mr. Hacquoil include Link buses in his surveys as they are accessible as well. It was noted that when the survey was started, the Link buses did not exist.

## **8.2 Alan Farquhar - Study on Facilities - Accessibility Issues**

Mr. Farquhar updated the Committee regarding an idea he raised a couple months ago to have students do a directed study on accessibility. He advised the Committee that he had contacted Jerome (Jerry) Singleton, who works at Dalhousie in the Psychology Department, dealing with social and physical accessibility. Mr. Singleton advised that he may be able to have one or two students do a directed study on accessibility; have them check pieces of real estate and measure them to see whether they are up to accessible standards. Mr. Farquhar advised that this would be a huge task, and suggested narrowing the study down to recreational facilities, where students would review the legislation. He pointed out that this would be a 'student' paper and not a high-priced study by someone with a degree, but it would be something that the Committee could use.

Mr. Farquhar further suggested that the study begin in September after having Mr. Singleton in to address the Committee. At that point, the Committee could narrow down and direct the focus of the study.

### **8.2.1 Mr. Phil Townsend, Manager, Capital Projects - Infrastructure & Asset Management**

Mr. Phil Townsend, Manager, Capital Projects, Infrastructure & Asset Management, joined the meeting just before 5 pm.

Mr. Rutt advised that Mr. Townsend came to the Committee meeting to advise them that HRM had, through the Capital Budget, allocated a sum of money for the Advisory Committee for Persons With Disabilities.

Mr. Townsend introduced himself and advised the Committee that his responsibilities also include parks and playgrounds. Speaking to the topic on the floor, Mr. Townsend advised that HRM has an asset management project and are trying to collect as much base material as possible. Mr. Townsend reiterated that this would be a huge task to assess all of the HRM owned buildings, and agreed with the focus on recreational and administrative buildings as they would have more of the general public visiting them.

Mr. Russell retired from the meeting at 5:12 pm.

Mr. Townsend noted that DalPlex has architectural students who may be better able to assess the accessibility issues and should be invited to assist in the study. Mr. Farquhar responded that he would contact Mr. Singleton and invite him to speak at the next Committee meeting in June. Mr. Townsend volunteered to be the contact person for Mr. Singleton on this project.

## **8.3 Phil Townsend - Funds For Accessibility Issues**

Mr. Townsend reminded the Committee that the last time he presented, he had advised them

that he would make the attempt to put some funds in the upcoming Capital Budget to deal with accessibility issues. He advised the Committee that, in this upcoming year, \$200,000 has been allotted for accessibility issues, specifically directed towards buildings. He suggested that the Committee should suggest areas to focus the funds on, not necessarily buildings. He went on to make the following three suggestions that relate to accessibility issues:

1. Spryfield Lions Arena; improve accessibility into the stands, such as ramping and floor level changes
2. Cole Harbour Place; looking for \$8,000 to install a lift at the pool to facilitate accessibility in and out of the pool
3. An Offleash Park; needs to be on a bus route and have access to water.

Mr. Townsend stated that he would be the point person on the projects. He advised that he would look to the Committee and do this in whatever form they direct. He stated that doing the three things outlined above would take about \$50,000 of the allotted \$200,000. Since it is from the Capital and not the Operating budget, there is no time limit for spending this, but Mr. Townsend advised that it should be spent this year and request more funds next year.

The Committee and Mr. Townsend discussed some areas where the funds would be used to the best advantage and decided that Mr. Townsend would return for the next meeting of the Committee on June 16, 2008 to further discuss the focus areas.

Mr. Rutt pointed out that having this commitment of \$200,000 to citizens with disabilities is a major start for HRM, and that the Councillors, Mr. Townsend and everyone involved should be commended.

The Chair suggested the members of the Committee contact anyone they know who may have some ideas of where the money should be directed, focussing on HRM owned assets. Mr. Townsend stated that the Committee can give him guidance to help prioritize and they can start putting pieces together and work their way down the 'shopping list'.

The Committee thanked Mr. Townsend for his assistance with these concerns and for advising them of the funds.

## **9. ADDED ITEMS**

### **9.1 Laughlin Rutt - Partnership for Access Awareness Week**

Mr. Rutt circulated a handout regarding 'Partnership for Access Awareness Week (PAANS) which will run from June 1<sup>st</sup> to Friday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008. He stated that there has not been much said in the media about it and wanted to make the Advisory Committee for Persons With Disability aware of the events.

He advised that he contacted the organization three weeks ago to see whether they wanted a Proclamation done by the Mayor. He further advised that the organization has not gotten back to him on this. He stated that the Committee may be interested in some of the slotted events, and contact information for the organization is on the handout.

**10. NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next meeting of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities will be June 16, 2008 at 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, City Hall.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:36 pm.

Sandra T. Riley  
Legislative Assistant