

**HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY**

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**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES  
MINUTES**

**September 21, 2009**

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

**REGRETS:** Ms. Mary Newcombe  
Ms. Theresa Horwill

**STAFF:** Mr. Laughlin Rutt, HRM Diversity Consultant  
Mr. Phil Townsend, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management  
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police  
Mr. Taso Koutroulakis, HRM Sr. Traffic Operations Engineer  
Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

The Chair advised that regrets were received from Mary Newcombe and Theresa Horwill. She also noted that the Committee has a vacancy as Mr. Sid Sodhi resigned.

The Chair introduced Mr. Peter Parsons, advising that he was representing VISTA and had been invited to today's meeting.

Ms. Caron advised that Barb Legay, also from VISTA, had been planning to attend, but was called away at the last minute and she asked her to pass on her regrets.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**MOVED by Ms. Coffey, seconded by Councillor Wile that the minutes of July 20, 2009 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

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

At the request of the Chair, the Committee agreed to deal with item 6.3.1 immediately following item 4.1.

**MOVED by Councillor Wile, seconded by Mr. Boyd that the agenda, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**4. BUSINESS ARISING/DEFERRED ITEMS:**

**4.1 Update on Disbursement Funds - Phil Townsend**

Prior to Mr. Townsend's update, the Chair remarked on the opening of the Service Dog Park at the intersection of Rannie Drive and Cogswell Street advising that the event was well received in the media. She noted that it received national attention through CTV news and in an article in the *Globe and Mail*.

Mr. Townsend reviewed the status of the projects on the Disbursement Funds List, and submitted a copy for the file.

A discussion ensued and Mr. Townsend responded to questions. Mr. Townsend was asked to follow up on:

- accessibility of the Argyle Street entrance at City Hall.
- the mats put down at City Hall for snow and rain tend to buckle
- St. Andrew's Centre elevator
- door opener for the parkade at Alderney Landing (from the parking lot)
- audible signals at the ferry terminal and Point Pleasant Park

Mr. Townsend advised that Centennial Pool has provided a box of outdated parking passes to be reused as parking passes for those individuals wanting to access the Service Dog Park. He noted that there is an area in the parking lot set aside for anyone who wants to use the Park, and if they display the pass on the dash of their car then they will not be ticketed.

The Chair advised that she was asked to coordinate the handing out of the passes.

At 4:28 p.m. Mr. Townsend retired from the meeting.

### **6.3.1 Audible Pedestrian Signals and Timing of Crosswalk Signals**

The Chair advised that Mr. Koutroulakis had been invited to attend the meeting to speak to the issues of pedestrian audible signals and the timing of crosswalk signals.

Mr. Koutroulakis advised that for some time the Municipality has been working on a systematic installation program for the audible pedestrian signals, and recently a new audible sound which is called 'Canadian Melody' has been installed at some intersections in the east/west direction. He explained that the new sound has replaced the 'chirp' sound and this was done at the request of the CNIB because in certain parts of the country the sound was mistaken for a particular species of bird. Mr. Koutroulakis advised that staff are working with VISTA and the CNIB to identify locations which should be upgraded.

The Chair indicated that the new sound caught her by surprise and advised that there did not seem to be any advance media coverage on it and she questioned if there were plans for a media initiative.

In response, Mr. Koutroulakis advised that currently there were no plans and that he intended to speak with CNIB and VISTA as to the best way to get the information out to the public. He noted that a couple of years ago staff produced a crosswalk safety booklet and, hopefully, when it is updated, information on the new audible signals can be included.

Mr. Parsons advised that the group he represents, VISTA, can get the word out to individuals that are directly using it. He suggested that an important aspect when getting the message out is to emphasize consistency, i.e. these audible signals are consistent throughout the country.

The Chair noted that in her view, the new sound seems to be coming from a different direction (than east/west). In particular, she referred to the Duke Street/ Barrington Street intersection and advised that it even had her guide dog confused.

Mr. Koutroulakis explained that there are two speakers at every corner and they are pointed down at the crosswalk so the pedestrians crossing in a particular direction can hear it. He added though, that he would get staff to look into the Duke/Barrington installation, as he could hear it sitting in the meeting room this afternoon and the sound

is not supposed to be this loud.

Mr. Boyd suggested that staff also look into the one at Cornwallis Street and Barrington Street. He advised that it was also quite loud.

The Chair asked Mr. Koutroulakis if staff have received public feedback on the countdown system which has been installed at many of the signalized intersection crosswalks.

Mr. Koutroulakis advised that from a staff perspective the new system seems to have resulted in a reduced number of calls from the public expressing concern about a lack of time to cross the street.

A discussion ensued with Mr. Koutroulakis responding to questions.

The Chair thanked Mr. Koutroulakis for his presentation and responding to questions, and to Mr. Parsons for participating in the discussion.

Mr. Koutroulakis advised that if Committee members had further questions, they could forward them on to him.

Prior to closing the discussion the following points were noted:

The Chair advised that Regional Council has an Active Transportation Committee and suggested that it should also be consulting with Mr. Koutroulakis' department.

Mr. Laughlin Rutt made reference to the average time expected for someone to be able to cross at a signalized intersection, and pointed out that he uses a manual wheelchair, as opposed to a motorized wheelchair, and it takes him longer to cross an intersection when there is a grade to climb.

Ms. Johanne Caron noted that it is widely known that a large section of population is aging and she was surprised that standards in regard to these concerns have not been reconsidered and changed based on this fact.

#### **4.2 2009 Work Plan**

A draft work plan for 2009-2010 was submitted.

The Committee entered a discussion. The following points were put forward:

The Chair advised that she felt the work plan should include following up and determining the status of recommendations the Committee has put forward previously.

It was suggested that Item 3 RE Metro Transit Accessibility was best left to the Metro

Transit Accessibility Committee. Ms. Caron suggested that perhaps the Committee could extend a bi-monthly invitation to Metro Transit staff to provide updates to the Committee.

Ms. Coffey suggested that the issue of wheelchair accessible taxis should be a topic on its own.

The Chair advised that she would re-draft the work plan and bring it back.

Mr. Rutt suggested that the Committee should not feel that it has to follow up and find out what has happened to the recommendations made in the past. He indicated that if Council has provided direction concerning a recommendation from the Committee, and there has been no information coming back to the Committee, then it is really up to Council to follow up and find out what has happened.

5. **NEW BUSINESS:** None

6. **CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS**

6.1 **Correspondence:** None

6.2 **Petitions:** None

6.3 **Presentations:**

6.3.1 **Audible Pedestrian Signals and Timing of Crosswalk Signals**

This item was dealt with earlier in the meeting. See page 4.

7. **REPORTS:**

The Chair noted that Ms. Nadine MacKay had followed up on questions raised at the August meeting from her presentation and an e-mail in this regard had been circulated.

8. **ADDED ITEMS:** None

9. **NEXT MEETING DATE:** October 19, 2009

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.