

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

APRIL 17, 2000

MINUTES

PRESENT: Darrell Robar, Chair
Margaret Hiltz
Donald Mullins
Cynthia Street
Ron Alley
Councillor Blumenthal
Betty MacDonald
Anne Langille
Jane Cale
Donald J. MacDonald
Barbara LeGay
Paul Connors
Bob Venus

ALSO PRESENT: Charla Williams, Diversity Programs Coordinator
Roel Vis, Schedule Planner, Metro Transit
Elsie Cholette, N.S. League for Equal Opportunities
Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

REGRETS: Peggy Brown and Maureen Reynolds

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The meeting convened at 4:00 p.m., Training Room, 3rd Floor Duke Tower.

3.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

3.2 **BRILLE PRINTER**

Geri Kaiser and Deborah Storey, Shared Services were in attendance at the meeting to update the Committee on the status of the request for a braille printer. Staff was also seeking guidance and validation from the members. Ms. Kaiser was pleased to advise that Council has supported staff's recommendation for funding of this project.

Two options have been considered:

- contracting out
- doing in house

Deborah Storey has determined through her research that it takes up to six weeks for materials to be brailled to be returned. It has been concluded that the most effective way is to do the work in house.

Ms. Moore of the CNIB has been contacted regarding whether the Municipality should be concentrating on the provision of documents in braille or in an alternate format. Ms. Moore advised that a larger number of individuals would benefit from having documents produced in a larger font. Ms. Kaiser sought input from the Committee on whether staff should proceed with the provision of braille services or the provision of large type. Staff recognized that the Committee's recommendation was to provide a braille printer.

It was suggested by staff that the following items would initially be provided in braille:

- Regional and Community Council agendas and minutes
- Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities agendas and minutes
- business cards for councillors, senior administrators and community development staff.

During the ensuing discussions, Ms. LeGay noted that large print and braille are not mutually exclusive. In order to fill the needs of the visually impaired community, both should be provided. She did not feel the community should be divided up. She felt the Municipality should try to accommodate all needs, especially the needs of the most needy, those cut off from all information.

Another option is providing the visually impaired with tapes and computer disks. Ms. LeGay believed most blind people would accept things on tape. Most are computer literate and information via e-mail is effective, especially if they have a braille printer. Computer software also allows increases in font size.

Ms. LeGay concluded that it would be best to obtain the braille printer now, if the money is available.

Councillor Blumenthal referred to his desire to see the Municipality sell its braille services to the rest of the Atlantic Provinces, thus generating revenue for the HRM. It was confirmed that Ms. Storey has done some research in this area. The CNIB may decide to use the HRM's services versus sending their materials to Toronto.

Mr. Connors was of the opinion that once the visually impaired community recognizes that information is available in braille, more people will access it.

The Chair questioned whether more people would avail themselves information in an audio format. High speed taping equipment is apparently available. It was noted that the CNIB are of the opinion that more people use audio tapes than braille. The cost of equipment to produce audio tapes is similar to the cost of a braille printer.

It was suggested that a business case be developed to support the acquisition of the high speed taping equipment in next year's budget. There may be organizations which would also wish to take advantage of high speed taping equipment.

Ms. Storey noted that there are items such as the Recreation brochure, bus schedules, etc. which are not practical to convert to braille. These would be more suitable for audio taping.

(Betty MacDonald arrived)

Ms. LeGay noted that when attending meetings such as this, it is easier to have materials in braille to refer to, so one can listen to the debate. Tapes would not be an option for meetings.

(Ann Langille arrived)

Whether a reader is required to produce the audio tapes or it is done electronically was not known. Essentially the piece of equipment is a high speed duplicator.

Ms. Kaiser noted that if the Recreation Brochure was to be produced in braille, approximately 900 braille pages would result. In such instances she proposed it would be

more practical to simply provide generic information, ie. what program and services are offered, telephone numbers to obtain more information from call centers or Community Recreation Services.

In addition to the list of items staff earlier referred to for provision in braille, it was also suggested that the Waste Removal Schedule, staff phone numbers and tax assessments be provided in this format. Ms. Kaiser noted that the phone numbers change frequently, but agreed that numbers related to the CAO, Human Resources, the Call Centre and Metro Information should be made available. She felt list of approximately twenty-five (25) numbers of significance could be produced.

Ms. Williams noted that some sophisticated technology is available to translate into braille. She felt it would be worthwhile if the Municipality adopted a corporate wide text standard, ie. minimum font size to be used to make documents more reader friendly. She felt that any bylaws or regulations pertaining to public safety should be provided in braille.

Ms. Kaiser felt that it would only be practical to provide bylaws in braille on demand at this time. As bylaws are harmonized, it could be required that the new bylaws be produced by the Clerks Office in Work Perfect format so they can be translated into braille.

It was felt that it will be incumbent on the Committee to educate and communicate with HRM departments the need for information to be made available in braille. While a circular to all departments was suggested, Ms. Williams felt this initiative, to raise awareness, would be more effective coming from the Management Group. Getting this matter to the management table was left with the Committee.

Ms. MacDonald noted that there are individuals who are both deaf and blind, and the provision of information to them in a braille format would be extremely beneficial.

It was concluded that the first priority should be to obtain a braille printer. Ms. Kaiser anticipates a report going to Council in early May. A list of items to be provided in braille will be provided to the Committee. Staff will commence research on alternate forms of providing information. Additional information will be provided to the Committee in due course. Staff will attend future meetings.

Ms. William recalled that at the February meeting the Committee adopted a motion to request that any information forthcoming to the Committee be provided in an electronic format. She felt this should be expanded to all reports to Council being provided in an electronic format. A standard practice be developed, ie. any reports sent to Council be provided in an electronic format, in addition to a hard copy.

Before continuing with the balance of the agenda, the Chair thanked the members who have worked on the Work Plan, the Vision Statement and attended the HRM 20/20 Initiative special meeting.

1.0 **APPROVAL OF AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

Two items were added to the agenda:

Item 4.5 - Rescheduling of Meeting Time

Item 4.6 - Transportation

2.0 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Langille sought clarification on an item contained in the March 20, 2000 minutes with respect to why a railing associated with Metro Centre stairs would get in the way. She envisaged the railing being in the centre of the stairs. Mr. Venus discussed her concern with Metro Centre staff. Metro Centre staff did not feel a central railing would be a good idea and were confident that their ushers could provide any assistance necessary. Apparently such installations are at Exhibition Park and problems have been associated with them. The operation of Exhibition Park has been taken over by the Trade Centre and the situation is being monitored.

The minutes of the March 20, 2000 meeting were adopted, as circulated, on motion of Ms. MacDonald and Mr. Connors.

3.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES (cont'd)**

3.1 **HRDC**

The Chair will try to have a representative from the HRDC attend the May meeting. It was suggested by Ms. Williams that Mr. Howard Green, Regional Director might not be the appropriate person. It was suggested that Paul MacDonald, CCRW might be more appropriate.

(Roel Vis arrived)

3.3 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee's terms of reference were adopted at Regional Council's March 21, 2000 meeting.

3.4 **WORKPLAN**

A copy of the draft 2000/2001 Workplan was circulated with the agenda package. Ms. Cale noted it essentially combined input from Cynthia Street and herself. Ms. Cale noted that another version will be sent out in due course.

During the review of the draft the following areas were discussed:

- Develop an "Accessibility" news group off the Committee's Web site.

It was noted that this would essentially be a discussion group. It was not felt that it would have to be monitored. Members of the Committee could look at the site periodically and bring any hot items to the Committee's attention.

Ms. Williams cautioned that it would have to be determined whether regulations pertaining to the HRM Web site would permit such a news group.

- Referring to Article 6 - Past representative situations have included - Ms. Williams felt the authors of the draft might wish to be less specific and substitute something more generic.
- The tie-in, if any, with the Committee's HRM 20/20 Workbook.

Mr. Vis felt there might be some issues addressed in the Workbook which might be included in the Work plan, ie. the curb cut issue. Mr. Connors agreed that there were some issues identified in the HRM 20/20 submission which would be targeted. By reviewing the Workbook submission, any contradictions could be avoided. Copies of the submission will be provided to Jane Cale and Cynthia Street.

- In Activity 5, mention is made to Metro Centre seating. Ms. Williams did not feel this facility fell within the Committee's scope. She felt reference to public access in general would be better. Councillor Blumenthal argued this was not necessarily the case. While the Trade Centre Board might be independent, for the time being the HRM own the facility.
- Reference was made to page 3, Resource Requirements and the budget impact.

Ms. Williams felt an Accommodation Check List for all committees of Council was desirable. She was concerned that only accommodations would be provided for this Committee not others.

Under Resource Requirements, Ms. Williams felt the Committee should consider any meetings over and above the normal monthly meetings. By identifying additional requirements for interpreters, etc. the Municipal Clerks Office can make

provision in its budget. Ms. Williams also felt the inclusion of interpreters was beneficial from an awareness perspective. The next draft will add special accommodation, ie. interpreters and braille.

The Chair encouraged the members to put forward additional ideas for the Workplan. The Workplan will be reviewed and discussed further at the May meeting.

3.5 ACCOMMODATIONS GUIDELINES WORKING GROUP

In absence of Peggy Brown, deferred.

3.6 UPDATED COMMITTEE LIST

Circulated with agenda package. Mr. Vis had noted that Lori Patterson's name should be deleted from the Staff Appointee List. She is now employed with Tourism.

4.0 NEW BUSINESS

4.5 RESCHEDULING OF MEETING TIME

As Barb LeGay had to leave the meeting early, this item was moved up on the agenda.

Ms. LeGay noted that she had a medical appointment Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6:00 p.m. These appointments can't be changed and rather than resigning from the Committee she asked if the meeting time could be changed. The members were canvassed on a number of alternate times and week days to hold the meeting and it was concluded, as a compromise, that the meetings be held in future from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

It was suggested that the key issues to be addressed at the meetings be dealt with between the core hours of 4:00 to 5:00 so those who are late arriving or early leaving can participate.

3.0 BUSINESS ARISING (cont'd)

3.7 HALIFAX METRO CENTRE

Mr. Venus was pleased to report that Mr. Williams has advised him that in future the Metro Centre staff will be ordering scent free soap for the dispensers.

(Barb Legay left)

3.8 **BROCHURE ON ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITIES**

A brochure provided by Maureen Reynolds was circulated to the members for their information.

3.9 **ROSE FACILITY MANAGEMENT'S MANDATE**

Ms. Williams will circulate information with the next agenda package.

3.10 **CROSSWALK UPDATE RE MS. BEAVER'S DEAF DAUGHTER**

Deferred.

3.11 **IDENTIFICATION OF SPEAKERS AND DISTRICTS AT COUNCIL**

Mr. Alley reported that he and Betty had met a couple of times to discuss the matter. They have watched Regional Council meetings and proposed the following recommendations which would aid in the identification of Councillors:

- Each Councillor be introduced by name and district with the camera focusing on the individual. The Councillor could either stand or raise their hand. This practice would be advantageous for the blind, partially blind and deaf.

Mr. Alley felt this practice could be easily accommodated and done before the Council meeting started.

It was recognized that things move quite quickly at Council sessions, particularly during the debate of contentious issues and the flow of dialogue would be interrupted if each speaker had to be introduced by name and district.

- An announcement be made that a list of Councillors and their Districts is available through the Clerks Office in various formats, ie. braille, disk, large font, etc. in addition to the regular brochures.

Mr. Alley noted that Betty MacDonald had conducted a survey of deaf viewers to determine how they liked the interpreter service. While quite a few people were pleased with the services of the interpreter(s), for those who do not know sign language, closed captioning would be a better alternative. Ms. MacDonald noted that not all deaf people sign the same way. It is recognized that this can be very expensive. It was suggested that this is

something the Committee may wish to investigate in the coming year. She felt it was wonderful that HRM has taken this initial step.

Alternatives to having the Councillors identify themselves and their District at each Council session were considered. It was noted that there is a benefit of instigating such a practice as it raises awareness of Council members that there are individuals with disabilities in the viewing audience and members of the public will be aware of taking the deaf and visually impaired into consideration when they give their presentations.

When making the request, Ms. Williams suggested that reference be made to the Community and Race Relations Policy. Those with disabilities are one of the communities the Policy addresses.

The following issues surrounding the subject of introductions were raised:

- During introductions, should mention be made of absent members? Mr. Alley felt only those in the Chamber should be introduced. He would like to see members introduced as they join the meeting.
- In the event the Mayor leaves the Chair, should the acting Mayor be introduced. Mr. Alley felt the Councillor should introduce him/herself.
- A verbal roll call be conducted, so a voice can be associated with a name. Mr. Alley will add to the list.
- Whether those leaving the meeting should be identified? Mr. Alley did not feel there was any point in identifying the comings and goings of such individuals. It was just important that when the individual gets up to speak, people know who he/she is. While it would be nice to know what District the individual represents, this list is available from the Clerk's office and on the HRM Web site.
- Camera work is done by Access Cable and it would be advantageous to speak with them regarding the matters raised so they are familiar with the issues.
- Perhaps a standard voice over could be used, ie. prior to each Council meeting, the Councillors pictures are aired with their names and district they represent. Councillor Blumenthal liked this idea.

Mr. Alley will pursue these suggestions further and discuss with Access Cable T.V. staff.

Mr. Alley and Ms. MacDonald will draft the recommendations and e-mail to the Clerk.

3.12 VON TRANSPORTATION

Deferred in absence of Peggy Brown. Some information on this subject had been provided by Mr. Vis, which will be circulated in the next agenda package.

3.13 **PEDWAYS**

Deferred.

3.14 **HRM 20/20 INITIATIVE SUBMISSION**

The notes taken by Mr. Vis as a result of the Workshop were typed and submitted.

4.0 **NEW BUSINESS (cont'd)**

4.1 **CANADIAN PARAPLEGIC ASSOCIATION CORRESPONDENCE RE TIE DOWNS FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS - METRO TRANSIT**

Deferred.

4.2 **CANADIAN DISABILITY NEWS WEB SITE AND BULLETIN**

A copy of the news bulletin recirculated in the agenda package.

4.3 **REGIONAL COUNCIL REQUEST FOR THE COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE HOW CROSSWALKS AND CURB CUTS CAN BE IMPROVED FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS**

The Chair noted that Councillor Read moved a motion at Regional Council's March 21, 2000 meeting that the Committee investigate the matter of crosswalks and curb cuts for wheelchairs to identify any that could be improved. The Chair sought suggestions on how to proceed.

It was suggested that David McCusker, Manager, Traffic and Transportation Services could assist the Committee.

Mr. Connors recalled at the time of amalgamation the four units had different standards. A new standard was subsequently adopted for the HRM, which was essentially a compromise. When there is any new construction, this new standard is followed. It was suggested that an inventory is required. Reference was made to the fact that Street Inspectors could do this during the course of their normal duties.

During discussions problem curb cuts associated with the following locations were identified.

- City Hall
- Mumford Road
- Morris and Barrington Streets (grate at bottom)
- Also, the steepness of the ramp into the City Hall parking area, which eliminated the possibility of Access-a-Buses entering were identified.

The Chair will send a request to Mr. McCusker through Kulvinder Dhillion, Director of Engineering, noting that the request is in response to a motion of Council. Councillor Read wants to ensure the proper placement of any curb cuts during new construction. Mr. Connors will assist the Chair in drafting the correspondence. Once a response is received, the Committee can then review the information and make a recommendation, ie. based on discussions with municipal staff, here are the concerns and here are the Committee's recommendations. It was felt that time was of an essence in responding back to Council. A copy of the letter to Mr. Dhillion will be sent to Councillor Read.

It was suggested by Ms. Williams that rather than describing problems associated with curb cuts, pictures be taken of an individual in a wheelchair negotiating problem ones. Examples of well designed curb cuts would also be photographed. They could be made into slides.

4.4 SURVEY - DRIVERS WITH DISABILITIES

A memo dated March 22, 2000 from Mr. McCusker entitled Survey - Drivers with Disabilities was circulated in the agenda package.

Due to time restraints, it could not be reviewed at his meeting. Deferred to May.

4.6 TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Hiltz had requested this item be added to the agenda. Due to time constraints it could not be dealt with. Deferred until May.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Mr. Venus referred to a number of special events planned for the Municipality in the coming months. He felt it would be advantageous if the Special Events Coordinator, Andrews Cox, could be invited to an upcoming meeting. Mr. Venus would like to be assured that those with disabilities will be taken care of. Ms. Williams suggested inviting the Hon. Alan Abraham, Chair of the Tall Ships Event to a meeting. She felt it would be

beneficial from an awareness point of view. The Committee was assured that Mr. Cox would be able to address all events.

Mr. Cox will be invited to the May meeting.

5.0 **ACCESS-A-BUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The March minutes will be provided with the next agenda package.

6.0 **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held Monday, May 15, 2000 from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

7.0 **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:00 p.m.

Darrell Robar
Chair

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk