

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

MINUTES

May 17, 2004

PRESENT:

Ms. Betty MacDonald, Chair
Ms. Joanne Coffey, Vice-Chair
Councillor Meade
Ms. Sally Campbell
Ms. Lynn Demont
Mr. Patrick Harrington
Ms. Barbara LeGay
Ms. Joan Loveridge
Mr. Warren Reed
Ms. Cathy Robertson
Ms. Ruth Szabo

ABSENT:

Councillor Sarto
Mr. Nigel Allison (regrets)
Ms. Peggy Brown (regrets)
Mr. Kim Kenney
Ms. Janet Spears
Mr. Kevin Hindle, Metro Transit (regrets)
Ms. Roxanne MacInnis, TDM Coordinator (regrets)

STAFF:

Ms. Charla Williams, Co-ordinator, Diversity Program
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Mr. Ed Thornhill, Manager, Permits and Inspections
One Interpreter
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:09 pm.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - April 19, 2004

Deferred until June meeting as the minutes were not available.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Move: Item 7.1 Accessible Housing for Persons with Disabilities to immediately follow approval of agenda.

Additions: 8.1.1 Sidewalk Snow Removal - Joanne Coffey
8.2.1 Meeting Room Location - Legislative Assistant

MOVED by Ms. Joanne Coffey, seconded by Ms. Cathy Robertson that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. REPORTS

7.1 Accessible Housing for Persons with Disabilities

- A report dated May 13, 2004 was before the Committee.
- A copy of the document "WHAT WE HEARD" from the Nova Scotia Building Advisory Committee was attached to the above report.

Mr. Edward Thornhill, Manager, Permits and Inspections presented his report.

- The report describes the process by which Provincial Building Legislation is amended and the influence HRM and this Committee could have on amendments to the regulations.
- 2001 - Review done of Barrier-free requirements. Amendments may be introduced in the Spring Legislature (Provincial) of 2005 which will correspond with the 2005 National Building Code.
- Process involves extensive public consultation - a discussion paper was distributed and responses reviewed by the Building Advisory Committee and page 4 of that report shows proposed amendments to the Building Code Regulations.
- Current draft proposal includes 5% of residential suites in multi-tenant occupancies required to be fully barrier-free.
- It is possible to have Provincial regulations that would apply exclusively to HRM although there are no such regulations now that are exclusive to any municipality and

the Building Advisory Committee is reluctant to do so. If a standard is required, then it would be appropriate across the Province as the intention of Provincial regulations is that there be consistency.

- HRM Staff are available to assist this Committee in formulating their recommendations.

The Committee thanked Mr. Thornhill for his presentation.

The Committee raised the following points during the ensuing discussion:

- Approximately 1000 new (apartment) units are being built in the Clayton Park area and not one is being built for wheelchair accessibility.
- Once a wheelchair user moves into an accessible apartment (or an apartment they have had to modify to be accessible) they have to stay there as there are no other places to move.
- 10% of new construction (apartments/condominiums) should/must be wheelchair accessible.

Mr. Thornhill advised this Committee could set up a Sub-Committee and forward recommendations to Regional Council regarding building code amendments. He further added that 70% of development is being done in HRM so recommendations will be considered.

- Currently there are no requirements to make an apartment barrier-free accessible with all the accommodations required for kitchens/washrooms etc. The requirement is that you be able to get into the suite and into the washroom. Getting in does not necessarily mean you can use it (height or position of light switches/handles etc.).
- HRM should have double the percentage of the Province for accessible units as it has a higher population and a higher disabled, aging population as well. People come to urban HRM for medical reasons, educational reasons and we should accommodate them.
- We should ask for 20% and not settle for 10% or 5%.
- Perhaps incentives could be offered to the developers to encourage accessible units in new construction.

Mr. Thornhill commented everything can be negotiated during the development agreements including barrier-free requirements. Ms. Barbara LeGay cautioned offering incentives as incentives could result in developers only providing barrier free if there are incentives there for them and not because of need.

- Provincial and Federal Governments offer grants to make units accessible.

MOVED BY Ms. Joanne Coffey, seconded by Ms. Sally Campbell that the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities accept the staff report, dated May 13, 2004, as presented by Mr. Ed Thornhill. Further, that a Sub-Committee be formed to work with Planning and Development Services staff to make recommendations by fall 2004 to the Nova Scotia Building Advisory Committee. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Ms. Betty MacDonald, Chair, left the meeting at 4:45 pm. Ms. Joanne Coffey, Vice-Chair, assumed the role of Presiding Officer at 4:45 pm.

Volunteers for the Building Code Sub-Committee were: Ms. Joanne Coffey, Ms. Sally Campbell, Ms. Cathy Robertson and Ms. Betty MacDonald (as Chair of the Committee, Ms. MacDonald would be an ex-officio member of any and all Sub-Committees). Ms. Coffey suggested various disabilities be represented on this Sub-Committee such as hard of hearing as well as wheelchair users). Ms. Williams clarified all Committee members are able to make comments on the building code and forward them to the Sub-Committee.

The Committee requested an updated membership list be circulated to the members as soon as possible.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Status Sheet Items

Ms. Coffey requested clarification on which version of the status sheet was current. The Legislative Assistant advised the shorter version Ms. Coffey and Ms. MacDonald revised was the most current revision but due to computer problems the copy was unable to be printed for this evenings meeting. Ms. Coffey advised she would contact Ms. Williams to ensure all items were up to date on the status sheet.

The Legislative Assistant answered questions from the Committee explaining the Status Sheet was originally developed as a tracking tool for Legislative Assistants to monitor requests from Committees for information/reports. It was originally a simple tool to aid the Legislative Assistants in monitoring what action (request for information/report from staff) was requested by the Committee and to whom the request was sent. Once the information is received the item is removed from the Status Sheet. The Legislative Assistant added it is not necessary for the Committee to receive the Status Sheet in their agenda packages as it is an internal tracking tool and is the responsibility of the Legislative Assistant to update and monitor.

MOVED BY Mr. Patrick Harrington, seconded by Mr. Warren Reed that the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities no longer receive the status sheet as part of

their agenda package and that the maintenance of the status sheet be left to the Legislative Assistant.

Ms. Charla Williams advised the issue of the ramp in the Pedway should be removed from the Status Sheet. Mr. Harrington agreed and commented he remembers the answer received on the Pedway issue was that it could not be done. Ms. Coffey agreed to remove this item from the Status Sheet.

The Legislative Assistant responded to further questions from the Committee regarding new items being added to the Status Sheet and further explained the Status Sheet would contain any new requests for action from the Committee such as staff reports or letters to be written that would involve a response. If it were simply a request to have a thank-you letter sent, that would not be added to the Status Sheet as you would not be expecting a response from a thank-you letter. For example, a motion was just made to have Regional Planning staff meet with this Committee on June 21. That item will be added to the Status Sheet as it is a request from this Committee for information from staff and a response is expected. After the staff presentation in June, the item will be removed from the status sheet. Again, the status sheet is simply a tool used by the Legislative Assistants to keep track of what action the Committee has requested, who was sent the request, what action is being taken and what response has been received to date and what has to be reported back to the Committee. Upon further questioning, the Legislative Assistant responded, if the Committee requests a Committee member to obtain information and report back to the Committee, this item would go on the Status Sheet as you have asked for information and you are expecting a response. If a Committee member volunteers to do research on an issue, then this would not necessarily be added to the Status Sheet.

Ms. Charla Williams commented this is an opportunity for the Committee to streamline the process and make it easier on everyone. Committee members have to take responsibility for the information/research/education they are doing in order to be up to speed on whatever issues you are dealing with and leave the administrative function of this Committee to the Legislative Assistant.

Ms. Joanne Coffey advised she would forward the current revised status sheet to Ms. Williams for review and then will forward it to the Legislative Assistant.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS

- Mr Warren "Gus" Reed distributed copies of his presentation to the Committee.

5.1 Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Reed presented items 5.1 and 5.2 together. See item 5.2 for more details.

5.2 HRM Departments Invited to Present to Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities

- A handout of Mr. Reed's presentation was distributed to the Committee. Mr. Warren "Gus" Reed, Member of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, presented an outline of ideas regarding a work plan for the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities Committee. He further suggested an invitation be sent to the various HRM Business Units to present to the Committee as an educational benefit for staff and for this Committee. He presented a draft of an invitation letter that could be sent to each department and a thank you to be sent to them after presenting.

Mr. Reed raised the following points during his presentation:

- There are many challenges to Planners to make HRM more liveable and it is important for people like us to speak up. There is an opportunity for us to affect what is happening in the city. We can make a good contribution.
- Awards are given to cities for being liveable, accessible, greenest etc. We could work toward such a goal. We could have as our goal to make HRM liveable/accessible for all residents. For example: It is difficult (for wheelchair users) to get to Bayer's Lake Industrial Park (for movies/shopping).

Ms. Joanne Coffey advised low floor buses will be here (in HRM) within a couple of years and then service to Bayer's Lake will be more accessible.

- We could invite HRP (Halifax Regional Police) to present to us regarding crimes against the disabled as it is one of the fastest growing crimes in the country.
- If this Committee is amenable to this suggestion, we could invite departments to speak to us.

The Committee thanked Mr. Reed for his presentation and during the ensuing discussion raised the following points:

- HRM is in the process of a 25 year plan for HRM. Perhaps you could attend one of the thirteen (13) public meetings and present your concerns.
- Terence Bay area has a boat ramp that now has a handicap ramp (at a cost of \$5,000.00) to permit a person in a wheelchair to go directly down to and on the boat. This is something that could be recognized as it may be the only one in HRM.

MOVED BY Councillor Gary Meade, seconded by Ms. Lynn Demont that beginning in 2005 all handicap ramps built in HRM for new sidewalks or sidewalk renewal

projects be painted blue. Further, that staff provide a report on this issue to the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities.

Councillor Meade advised at Cunard and Windsor Streets there is a handicap ramp in the middle of the sidewalk and you can not tell until you are upon it. Perhaps a blue tint could be added to the concrete so it will stand out. In the United States all such areas are painted orange. Mr. Patrick Harrington commented the colour contrast would have to be sharper than a tint or a glitter for those with a visual impairment or low vision. There would have to be a textural difference as well so you could feel it underfoot. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Charla Williams suggested this Committee identify their focus for the year and then approach the appropriate HRM Business Unit(s) that deal with the specific issue rather than invite all business units in HRM to present. Further, change would be made through recommendations to the business units and not by asking questions at a presentation.

Mr. Reed clarified an annual theme may be transportation or housing. Ms. Williams confirmed this would be a better process for the Committee to take. For example, Regional Planning is currently holding thirteen (13) meetings, so this would be a good time to address planning issues. Perhaps you could have Regional Planning have a meeting specific to issues related to disabilities.

Ms. Joanne Coffey added if the Committee needs a work plan we must consider that we tend to move from one issue to another as some issues take a lot of work such as the sidewalk cafes or accessible housing issues. If we have departments come and explain to us what they do, we may lose time and focus on these issues.

MOVED BY Councillor Gary Meade, seconded by Ms. Barb LeGay that Regional Planning Staff be requested to meet with the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities at their June 21, 2004 meeting. Further, that Regional Planning Staff be requested to have a Regional Planning public meeting specifically to address disability issues in HRM. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Ms. Barb LeGay commented the issue of the work plan has not been dealt with and there was only one suggestion. Perhaps this is being deferred to a later date and we could have a brainstorming session. Ms. LeGay further expressed concern that new members are not being heard and may have issues to raise.

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS

- 6.1 Correspondence - None
- 6.2 Petitions - None
- 6.3 Delegations - None

7. REPORTS

7.1.1 Accessible Units in New Construction

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

7.1.2 Status Sheet Sub-Committee - brief verbal update.

This item was dealt with earlier in the meeting. See page 5, Item 4.1 Status Sheet.

8. ADDED ITEMS/NEW BUSINESS

8.1 Sidewalk Snow Removal - Ms. Joanne Coffey

Ms. Coffey advised this is an important issue and must be addressed. Councillor Meade responded the issue of sidewalk snow removal as part of the general tax for HRM was defeated by Regional Council. He further commented sidewalk snowploughs are expensive (approximately \$75,000.00) and cannot be used for other uses such as mowing grass so are only operational for perhaps three (3) months of the year. Ms. Williams commented the issue has gone forward to Regional Council but the vote did not pass but it should be kept in mind as there may not be a solution at present but someone may come up with an idea in future that will go forward.

8.2 New Business

8.2.1 Meeting Room Location

The Legislative Assistant advised she has been researching possible locations for a larger meeting space on a ground floor level that would better accommodate the large Committee and the number of wheelchair users in attendance. Further, it would alleviate the safety concern in case of a power outage when the elevators may not be serviceable. She added staff is also assisting in the search for another location. She suggested the following possible locations:

- The Helen Creighton Room, Dartmouth Library, Alderney Gate

Committee members expressed concern with traveling to Dartmouth for a meeting and commented their preference would be to remain in the downtown Halifax area.

- Halifax Hall

The Legislative Assistant advised the Mayor's official functions/events would take precedence over the Committee meetings and the Committee could get "bumped" at short notice. The Committee agreed to consider other options at a future date.

9. **NEXT MEETING DATE** - Monday, June 21, 2004

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm.

Chris Newson
Legislative Assistant