

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
MINUTES
June 15, 2009

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

REGRETS: Mr. Gary Russell
Councillor Mary Wile

STAFF: Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant
Mr. Phil Townsend, Acting Director of Infrastructure and Asset
Management
Ms. Julia Horncastle, Acting Municipal Clerk

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10. ADJOURNMENT 07

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall. The members of the Committee and staff introduced themselves for the record.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - April 20, 2009 and May 11, 2009

MOVED by Joanne Coffey, seconded by Johanne Caron, that the minutes of April 20, 2009 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Joanne Coffey, seconded by Mary Newcombe, that the minutes of May 11, 2009 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

The agenda was accepted as circulated.

4. BUSINESS ARISING/DEFERRED ITEMS

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

Ms. McFadyen advised that she had written to Ms. Lori Patterson, Metro Transit, requesting a moratorium until such time as this committee had enough information to make a reasonable and informed recommendation to Mayor and Council. She advised she had not received a response prior to the announcement in the press regarding the delay until September. She noted the committee was still obliged to make a recommendation to Regional Council on the matter. She noted that there had been discussion with regard to the possibility of establishing a pass across the board for all disabled people, and referenced the letter in the package from VISTA (Visually Impaired Safe Travel Advisory Committee).

Ms. Barb Legay, advised that VISTA has been working with HRM on audible pedestrian systems for years and were very disappointed when they found out the pass was being taken away. She stated there was a concern as Metro Transit has had no consultation with the visually impaired or those with other disabilities. She also noted accessibility is also an issue and there is a reliance on drivers or other passengers to help identify which bus is coming and also when you arrive at your stop. She stated they are requesting the bus passes be maintained until there is an accessible system to blind and impaired people or until some other system is put in place.

Ms. Coffey noted the issue had been discussed by the committee in 2002 and requested any information from that time be circulated to the committee.

Ms. McFadyen advised that there is no specific policies regarding this and it varies from town to town.

Mr. Rutt stated the issue of bus passes and the inaccessibility of the regular transit system have to be viewed as two issues. He suggested the committee make a motion to bring to Council the advice of this committee that Metro Transit be asked to carry out a planning process that would include public engagement to work on the issue of inaccessible transit system and to come back with a plan that would address the points in the VISTA letter and a timeline on implementation. He further suggested that it be noted that citizen engagement be included not just the CNIB as there were other advocacy groups that should be included.

MOVED by Mr. Boyd, seconded by Ms. Coffey suggested that the committee ask Council and Mayor to request Metro Transit to provide a report to the committee with detail of the services that are missing to the blind.

Ms. McFadyen stated she would write a report to Council based on the input that has been received from community with a recommendation that Council request Metro Transit address points that have been raised including a timeline. She advised once the draft was finalized she would circulate to the members of the committee.

Councillor Blumenthal suggested the report also include that until accessibility is given to the blind nothing happens to the passes. In response, Ms. McFadyen noted that while they are related they are two separate issues.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Mr. Rutt noted that it was a unique situation for each municipality in other provinces. He advised that there is a need to recognize and come up with a solution that is unique to Halifax.

MOVED by Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Mr. Boyd that the bus pass not be taken away until accessibility has been reached for the visually impaired. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4.2 Update on Disbursement of Funds - Phil Townsend

Mr. Townsend advised that a number of projects approved by the committee are moving along and staff will be dealing with the service dog park. He advised the budget provided another

two hundred thousand dollars for accessibility projects. He stated a small amount has been committed to projects that were brought forward by staff which were important accessibility issues, noting he will provide that information to the committee. He advised there is approximately one hundred eighty to two hundred thousand dollars available to the committee in the upcoming year for projects that the committee would recommend moving forward. Mr. Townsend advised that the recommendations from the committee would go to his department for implementation, noting the funds could only be directed to HRM owned assets.

Ms. McFadyen requested information on the status of projects, including dollar amount, be forwarded to her. She noted there are a number of things from the previous year and Mr. Townsend advised he had pricing on those items and he will bring the information back to the committee.

4.3 Presentation by Ms. Anne MacRae, Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Disable Person Commission re Lack of Accessible Taxis in HRM

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

4.4 Clean Nova Scotia's proposal to Council re Pilot Project to allow more small efficient vehicles in the taxi industry

Ms. McFadyen advised that these vehicles pose a concern for blind persons because of the quiet factor and there is a need to ensure that they can still carry wheelchairs. Ms. Coffey advised she had held discussions with a Ms. Colleen Patton of Clean Nova Scotia and she will send information regarding this issue to Ms. McFadyen.

Ms. McFadyen suggested that Ms. Patton be requested to attend the July meeting to discuss the issue with the committee.

4.5 Appointment to Active Transportation Advisory Committee

MOVED by Ms. Caron, seconded by Ms. Newcombe, that Mr. Boyd be appointed to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee as the representative of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4.6 Important Information for Taxi Drivers in HRM about Passengers with Disabilities

The information was circulated and the Chair advised she would forward the information to the Taxi and Limousine Committee for circulation to taxi drivers.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Pool Accessibility and Pool Lifts - John Henry, Coordinator, HRM Aquatic Services

Mr. John Henry, Coordinator, Aquatic Services, advised he and his staff are working with the IWK in terms of children with disabilities to make centres more accessible. He provided a synopsis of some of the issues and concerns with accessibility to HRM pools.

5.2 Halifax Ferry Policy re Number of Service Dogs on Manifest

Ms. McFadyen advised she had spoken with the supervisor of ferries and asked him to make it a policy that when there is a service dog getting on the ferry that it be included on the manifest. The Legislative Assistant was requested to ascertain from Metro Transit if the passengers were counted for each ferry crossing.

5.3 2009 Work Plan

Mr. Rutt suggested the committee have a work plan and that it contain matters that are achievable. He suggested the committee put forward ideas to be included as part of the work plan for discussion. Ms. McFadyen advised she had a copy of a work plan and she would forward same to members of the committee.

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS

6.1.1 Letter dated May 25, 2009 from Lori Patterson to Duncan Williams, CNIB

The correspondence was received as information.

6.2 Petitions - None

6.3 Presentations - None

7. REPORTS - NONE

8. ADDED ITEMS - NONE

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is scheduled for July 20, 2009

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Julia Horncastle
Acting Municipal Clerk