

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

January 16, 2012

PRESENT: Theresa Horwill, Chair  
Tom Boyd, Vice Chair  
Troy Nauffts  
Mary Newcombe  
Brian Aird  
Cynthia Bryant  
Councillor Mary Wile  
Councillor Jerry Blumenthal

ABSENT: David MacLean

STAFF: Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, Human Resources  
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police  
Darren Young, Project Manager, Infrastructure & Asset  
Management  
Phillip Townsend, Director, Infrastructure & Asset Management  
Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant  
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm in the Media Room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 21, 2011**

**MOVED by Councillor Wile, seconded by Mary Newcombe, that the minutes of November 21, 2011 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

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

Additions:

- 8.1 Laughie Rutt - Report to the Transportation Standing Committee
- 8.2 Troy Nauffts - Electronic Voting System

The Committee agreed to move items 4.4 “Housekeeping Amendments to AAC Terms of Reference” and 5.1 “Appointment of AAC Representative to the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group” to the beginning of the agenda since quorum will be lost when Councillors Wile and Blumenthal have to leave at 5:15 p.m.

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

**4.4 Housekeeping Amendments to AAC Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference for the Accessibility Advisory Committee was before the Committee.

Mr. Aird had a question about the Terms of Reference regarding this committee increasing community awareness and the term not explicitly stating that it was from the Transportation Standing Committee. It was noted by the Committee that this was dealt with earlier in the report. Ms. Weagle explained to the Committee that the major change in the Terms of Reference is in the reporting, instead of reporting directly to Council the Accessibility Committee reports to the Transportation Standing Committee.

**MOVED by Councilor Blumenthal, seconded by Mr. Tom Boyd, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee recommend the Transportation Standing Committee approve amendments to the Accessibility Advisory Committee Terms of Reference. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

## **5.1 Appointment of AAC Representative to the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group**

The Committee nominated Mr. Boyd to be the Representative to the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group. Ms. Bryant is currently the representative to this Committee but is unable to attend due to health-related issues. It was decided that Mr. Boyd will be the representative to the Group until Ms. Bryant is able to attend the committee again.

**MOVED by Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Mary Newcombe, that Tom Boyd be appointed the interim Accessibility Advisory Committee representative to the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

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

### **4.1 Educational Awareness**

#### **4.1.1 HRM website accessibility – *Kelly Marney, HRM Web Master***

The Policy Statement for Inclusion on the Website was before the Committee.

Ms. Marney informed the Committee that the HRM web design team is currently working to completely overhaul the website but are striving to make the current website more accessible in the interim. HRM is working to be in compliance with W3C Priority 1 A Conformance. This would mean that the website is accessible to individuals with a variety of disabilities and guarantee the A Conformance standard.

Ms. Marney explained that HRM currently has 20,000 web pages and each department is responsible for entering their own content into the templates that her department distributes, which means that roughly 250 individuals are entering data into their website. This makes consistency a challenge particularly when it comes to accessible features.

It was reported that a new web design has been proposed and is currently under consideration. It has spectacular accessibility features and they are hoping that it will receive approval in a timely manner.

Mr. Nauffts is in regular contact with Ms. Marney and they have been working collaboratively to improve the current state of the website. Ms. Marney noted that the process of making such changes has been slower than expected, partly because her department has been going through a number of internal changes.

A new accessibility addition to the website will be six profiles that individuals with sight impairments can scroll over and listen to with talk-to-text. Ms. Marney sent them along in advance of the meeting to Mr. Nauffts, who had not tested them yet. Web Services are also working towards having all of the bus routes posted within the next month or so.

Ms. Bryant and Mr. Nauffts suggested that Ms. Marney touch base with the Atlantic Centre for Research, Access and Support for Students with Disabilities at Saint Mary's University. Ms. Marney noted that she has already been in contact with the Nova Scotia Community College and is looking forward to connecting with their disability consultant.

HRM Web Services has an ongoing contract with a software company that assists individuals who are visually impaired and individuals experiencing issues around English as a Second Language. There are certain accessible features that the software forces, such as requiring Alt tags on images.

Ms. Marney is very aware of issues with PDF documents, as raised by Mr. Nauffts, along with various forms of social media so she is helping to ensure that all of these mediums are accessible and that they are entering the information in an accessible format.

Ms. Marney and Mr. Nauffts are going to discuss some more specific, detailed issues after the meeting.

The Chair asked Ms. Marney to keep the Committee updated on their progress.

#### **4.1.2 Public Service Announcements/Awareness Campaigns**

This agenda item was not discussed at the meeting.

#### **4.2 Needham Centre – *Betty Lou Killen, Community & Recreational Services***

Ms. Killen informed the Committee that there is a plan to replace the Needham Centre. HRM intends to build a new community centre on the site of the current arena. Ms. Killen praised the input that the Chair and Councillor Blumenthal have provided in the process so far.

The fact that the facility is extremely important to the community has not been missed by HRM but the facility has a number of issues – it has been decided that the community needs a Community Category 1 Facility. It has been recommended to Regional Council through an information report that planning on the new facility should begin no more than five years from now.

In terms of a timeline, the planning of the new facility will begin in 2015/2016 when a community engagement process will commence an investigation of the community's needs and expectations in their future recreational centre. All of the information that is discovered throughout this process will be presented to Regional Council who will make the ultimate decision.

Ms. Killen noted that Category 1 Facilities do not typically have swimming pools. She informed the Committee that every case involving a community with a desire for a

swimming pool in a Category 1 Facility has been denied a pool by Council. It was recognized by both Ms. Killen and the Committee that the pool at the Needham Centre will be a very sensitive issue that will need to be discussed with the community. It is the hope that construction for the new facility will begin in 2018.

There are a few things that HRM is planning to change within the existing facility that they would like to discuss with the committee. They have \$25,000-\$50,000 and would like to have the Committee come for a tour of the centre where so that they can identify items that would make a big difference in the short term.

Councillor Blumenthal offered to make funds available in order to make the pool accessible by installing a lift. The Chair noted that Mr. Young would be able to find a reasonable price for a lift that could be installed in the pool.

Ms. Killen will be in contact with the Clerk's Office to set up a tour for the committee.

Mr. Blumenthal asked Mr. Townsend how much money the committee could spend on changes to the current Needham Centre. Mr. Townsend emphasized the fact that HRM is always looking for the best use of its funds and because this facility is on the list for demolition the Committee will have to exercise a level of caution. For example, an elevator would be difficult to justify but a lift for a swimming pool could be moved to the new facility.

The Committee can make recommendations to staff with regards to funding that they would like to use in this facility.

Councillor Blumenthal emphasized the need to make the front of the building accessible along with the washrooms. These improvements would allow individuals with disabilities to use the pool once a lift is installed. He would like to contribute \$80,000 towards the project and would like to have his funding matched by Council.

There was a discussion around the possibility of having an elevator installed, however, if they were to install an elevator it would have to go on the outside of the building due to lack of space. Mr. Boyd raised the idea of a different kind of lift that would be able to take a chair up one floor.

Councillor Blumenthal and Councillor Wile left at 5:15pm at which time the Committee lost quorum.

Mr. Nauffts asked whether or not the recommendation to Council around the swimming pool would change if the number of pool users was doubled or quadrupled through making the first floor more accessible. Ms. Killen made the point that the recommendations that come from Community & Recreational Services are based on a template approved by Council.

Mr. Boyd asked whether or not the arena that was being torn down would be replaced with a new arena in the North End and was informed that it would not. Ms. Killen mentioned that Community & Recreational Services has a large amount of data regarding the user groups of arenas so this decision is very well informed.

Ms. Killen offered to come back any time to update the Committee.

#### **4.3 Disability Training – *Laughlin Rutt, Human Resources***

The Training Agenda for January 16, 2012 was before the Committee.

Diversity is about the similarities and differences between people and inclusion is about making those differences into assets for individuals. Mr. Aird shared that in his experience inclusion has been a deliberate process, not an organic one.

Disability is one aspect/characteristic that people have. There are three ways that an individual can relate to someone with a disability: they are born with a disability themselves; they have experience with a person/persons with disabilities; the choices that individuals make e.g. an individual can make a choice to be involved with persons with disabilities, making them more capable in this regard.

When disabilities are talked about its generally in reference to what can be seen, however, most disabilities are ones that are invisible. Mr. Rutt explained that invisible disabilities are more mentally driven roadblocks and a personal view of disability often comes into play.

Mr. Rutt stated that we have been pre-programmed to think about disabilities in certain ways through society and the media. There are three prevalent models of disability:

1. The Charity Model which involves helping the unfortunate and pitying individuals with disabilities, often to raise money for organizations in the field.
2. The Medical Model which is used heavily by the medical profession and is driven by the idea of finding a cure for the disability. The categorizations in the medical model are related to what individuals cannot do as opposed to what they can.
3. The Independent Living Model which is focused around the fact that persons with disabilities should be afforded to make their own choices. This model comes into conflict with the other ones.

Mr. Rutt addressed the topic of communication with regards to persons with disabilities. He made the point that with some disabilities you have to have patience in order to have effective communication. For example, if you are communicating with someone that has a hearing impairment you have to have the patience to write notes down for them and look them in the eye when you speak.

It was explained to the Committee that when it comes to most diverse groups there is usually a generally accepted positive set of terms and a more negative set of terms that individuals should familiarize themselves with. The appropriate terminology for any

group is ever evolving and often changes with each generation. Mr. Rutt made the point that organizations have even had to change their name in order to take out words that have become offensive. In this case, it is good to stick with the generic term 'person with a disability' or use their name. Always put the word 'person' first to ensure that you have recognized them as a person before anything else.

Mr. Nauffts asked whether or not HRM has a policy requiring facilities to accommodate individuals with disabilities to the best of their ability. Mr. Rutt noted that he does not believe that there is a specific policy but HRM offices and departments have to adhere to other policies that make note of this issue. Mr. Townsend noted that HRM also has a hotline 490-4000 where you can call with a complaint which will get logged and the issue has to be addressed within a specified timeframe. When you log the complaint you can request that someone call you back to acknowledge your complaint.

#### **4.4 Housekeeping Amendments to AAC Terms of Reference**

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

### **5. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **5.1 Appointment of AAC Representative to the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group**

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

#### **5.2 Accessibility Advisory Committee Vacancy – Resignation of Joanne Coffey**

Joanne Coffey's letter of resignation was before the Committee.

The Chair requested that Committee members talk to anyone who they believe might be interested in sitting on the Committee the current vacancy needs to be filled.

### **6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & PRESENTATIONS**

#### **6.1 Correspondence - None**

#### **6.2 Petitions - None**

#### **6.3 Presentations - None**

### **7. REPORTS**

#### **7.1 Update on accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings**



### **7.1.1 Staff Update**

Supt. Falkenham updated the Committee on the status of parking meters around the oval. HRM has hired a consultant and at this time they are working through technical issues. Supt. Falkenham has also made it known to the appropriate individuals that disabled parking spaces have to be provided. The Chair asked him to put in a request for information on Mulgrave Park.

Mr. Young updated the Committee on a number of ongoing projects:

The North Woodside Community Centre washroom is complete and waiting for a new door operator which is arriving this week. The Chair asked Supt Faulkenham to check on this facility.

The Civic Arena now has its door operators installed while the Centennial Arena awaiting its doors. Mr. Young is sending an electrician to do the required work at Centennial Arena.

Tactile signage and paddle handles on sinks will be the next project that Mr. Young will focus on. Mr. Aird asked about having automatic sinks instead of handles on sinks, however, Mr. Young noted that they would be much more costly.

Mr. Young updated that \$48,000 has been spent to date on door operators.

Ms. Bryant left the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

### **7.1.2 Committee Member Update**

The Chair updated that the next Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group meeting is scheduled for February 17<sup>th</sup> and she will provide an update at the next meeting.

## **8. ADDED ITEMS**

### **8.1 AAC Report to the Transportation Standing Committee**

Deferred to the next meeting.

### **8.2 Electronic Voting System**

Ms. Marney offered to address some of the election issues from a web design standpoint. She has been involved in the process of forming the electronic voting system from a technical web standpoint. She has been working to ensure that this process is accessible and they are hoping to arrange for some testers prior to the vote.

## **9. NEXT MEETING DATE – February 20, 2012**

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Jenny Benson  
Legislative Support