

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

April 16, 2012

PRESENT: Theresa Horwill, Chair
Troy Nauffts
Mary Newcombe
Brian Aird
Cynthia Bryant
Councillor Mary Wile
Councillor Jerry Blumenthal
Lisa Pottie

REGRETS: Tom Boyd, Vice Chair

ABSENT: David MacLean

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

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in Room "Duke 1", 3rd floor, Duke Tower, 5251 Duke Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 19, 2012

MOVED by Councillor Wile, seconded by Mary Newcombe, that the minutes of March 19, 2012 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

- 8.1 Committee Membership
- 8.2 Hearing Assistance

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

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Disability Training (continuation) – *Laughlin Rutt, Human Resources*

A case study demonstrating the differences between equity and equality was before the Committee, distributed by Mr. Rutt at the meeting and read aloud.

Mr. Rutt noted that a constant theme that comes up whenever he is working with groups of people with disabilities is the difference between equity and equality. Mr. Rutt thought the best way to demonstrate this difference would be for the Committee to examine a case study which he presented.

He reviewed that equity means treating persons the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences. Equality means treating persons fairly and no more and no less favourably. Equality often does not have room for accommodation because everyone must be treated exactly the same way.

Mr. Rutt noted that the types of the scenarios outlined in the case study often come up in real life situations and the equity vs. equality debate is an ongoing issue many individuals face. For example, Mr. Rutt noted that when the Committee is requesting that a business unit provide accessible parking they are asking for equity which is based on accommodation. There is no definition of reasonable accommodation and courts regularly test this by looking at environmental hazards, health hazards and excessive costs. Ms. Pottie made a note that while this is true, in an employment situation

individuals with disabilities still need to meet the job standards and be able to do the job they were hired for.

The Committee agreed that as a group they should be looking for equity. Mr. Aird discussed how easy it is to forget how many individuals with disabilities there are and how best to accommodate them. It takes a very conscious effort to bear accommodation in mind. Ms. Pottie said the flaw is the fact that we are at a disadvantage in thinking about this due to the lack of universal design.

The Committee discussed the issues of accommodation and equity.

Mr. Nauffts suggested that at the next meeting Mr. Rutt discuss more appropriate language around disabilities.

4.2 Planning for Town Hall on Accessibility

Ms. Pottie and Mr. Nauffts had a discussion following the previous meeting which took place on March 19th to discuss planning for the Town Hall on Accessibility. Councillor Wile, Ms. Bryant, Ms. Pottie and Mr. Nauffts formed a Sub-Committee and will be meeting to further discuss logistics and will report back to the Committee.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Are you Ready? Nova Scotia's Guide to Disaster Preparedness: Tips for Persons with Disabilities – Barry Manuel, Coordinator, Emergency Management Office (EMO)

The "Are you Ready? Nova Scotia's Guide to Disaster Preparedness: Tips for Persons with Disabilities" brochure was distributed at the March 19, 2012 meeting.

Mr. Barry Manuel spent the first part of his time with the Committee discussing how the Nova Scotia Persons With Disabilities Emergency Preparedness Committee came to exist in 2004. The concept behind the Nova Scotia Persons with Disabilities Emergency Preparedness Committee is all about what persons with disabilities can do for themselves, as opposed to what EMO can do for them. It also connects individuals with disabilities with each other and community organizations to discuss the unique challenges they face.

Mr. Manuel designed a train-the-trainer program to teach people with disabilities how to teach other people with disabilities how to be prepared for an emergency.

Part of Mr. Manuel's job is researching grant applications from buildings that want to become designated comfort centres during an emergency. A large part of this research involves assessing the accessibility of the various venues, similar to the way the Committee does accessibility assessments. Comfort centres are places where individuals can go to get information and supplies, but not overnight accommodations.

The Chair requested that staff share the information that the Committee has already collected through its own accessibility assessment of HRM buildings.

Mr. Manuel noted that a new edition of the Brochure “Are you ready? Nova Scotia’s Guide to Disaster Preparedness: Tips for Persons with Disabilities” is going to be released this year.

Mr. Nauffts thought that the brochure was tailored to individuals with disabilities at home. Mr. Manuel noted that the current brochure is centred around the individual at home but that the next edition will include information for workplaces and will also encourage individuals with disabilities to build networks so that their community is aware of their circumstances and any extra assistance that they might require.

The Committee discussed evacuation procedures for persons with disabilities from apartment and office buildings.

Mr. Manuel shared with the Committee that there is a movement underway to reach into communities with volunteers to attempt to get individuals with disabilities to self declare. He is running a pilot project on this in Eastern Shore to assess the best ways to reach out into the local community. The volunteer groups are called JEMs (Joint Emergency Management Teams) and they are community volunteers. Currently there are four JEMs working along the Eastern Shore for the pilot project. Ms. Pottie noted that doing this through hospitals and senior homes could be very effective.

Mr. Rutt noted that there is a disability symbol on the halifax.ca website which has a number of resources and suggested that a link to the brochure be added to the resource list. He wondered if the information could be recorded if individuals with disabilities could call into the fire department or police department. Supt. Falkenham suggested that it could most likely be added to your civic address information. Mr. Manuel said that a City Watch list with the Halifax Regional Police could also serve this function. The Chair indicated she would check with the City Watch program whether this would be possible and will inform the Committee via email.

Mr. Manuel would like to ensure that he be able to continue to exchange information with the Committee and requested that a Committee member attend one of their upcoming meetings, perhaps in May. Their next meeting is taking place at 277 Pleasant Street 1:30-3:30pm on May 30th.

Mr. Young requested that Mr. Manuel provide the checklist that they are using to assess buildings for the Committee’s perusal.

Mr. Rutt recognized and praised the work of Mr. Manuel and his group, indicating that he found the information in the brochure very helpful as a person with a disability.

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & PRESENTATIONS

6.1 Correspondence – None

6.2 Petitions - None

6.3 Presentation - None

7. REPORTS

7.1 Update on accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings

7.1.1 Staff Update

Mr. Young indicated that his focus for the last month has been at the Needham Centre. Six door operators have been ordered and there is an order placed for a vertical lift. Various building modifications will be required to install the operators and vertical lift so there is a tender currently out for that. Mr. Young believes that the cost of the vertical lift will be \$14,000-\$15,000. A shower will be installed at the pool level and there will be some modifications to the washrooms. Door levers will be changed. Mr. Young received a quote on the tactile signage for the first and second floors. This will make the whole first floor and pool level accessible.

At the request of Councillor Wile, Mr. Young advised he would check on a basement level door at the Needham Centre that was opening the wrong way.

7.1.2 Committee Member Update

An email exchange between the Chair and Mr. Taso Koutroulakis, Manager, HRM Traffic Authority, was before the Committee.

The Chair updated the Committee on some of the issues discussed when he presented to the Committee last meeting. He informed the Chair that they have increased the walking time at the intersection of Spring Garden Robie and that they will be putting a “no stopping” sign on Agricola in front of Chapman’s Auto Body.

Ms. Bryant raised some questions about the intersection at Oxford Street and Quinpool based on an article published that reported a high volume of accidents there. Supt. Falkenham noted that the accidents were vehicular and not pedestrian, but he will follow up on this for the Committee.

The Chair noted that the Phase II Public Meeting for the Oval is on Thursday April 19th at 6:30 p.m. at the Atlantica Hotel and she would like someone from the Committee to attend. Councillor Wile will be attending and will report back to the Committee. The Chair said that she would get in contact with John Henry and request that he come to the next Committee meeting for an update on the Oval. Supt. Falkenham noted that this process is moving quickly so we should have this discussion shortly. Mr. Nauffts

suggested that Mr. Young contact Mr. Henry and find out when they will have completed draft drawings so that the discussion can be a more productive one.

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Committee Membership

The Committee discussed the need to fill a vacant position on the Committee.

MOVED by Mary Newcombe, seconded by Cindy Bryant, that, as per *Administrative Order Number One (Respecting the Procedures of Council)*, the Accessibility Advisory Committee approve that the position formerly held by David MacLean be declared vacated and that the Clerk arrange for the vacancy to be filled. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

8.2 Hearing Assistance

Ms. Bryant inquired about her requests for a loop system to accommodate her hearing impairment and whether or not anything had been done in this regard. The Chair discussed efforts that have been made with regard to utilizing the Halifax Regional Libraries' hearing loop systems.

Ms. Bryant explained that she has been going through a number of changes with her hearing and her doctors have said that a loop system or amplification system that you would be the best options for her. Ms. Bryant submitted a quote for the amplification system previously. Mr. Young requested to have the quote forwarded to him so that he can investigate whether additional capital is available anywhere in his department.

Ms. Bryant thought that the portable device would be more useful because more individuals and committees can use it. Mr. Young noted that if the loop system requires minimal wiring it would be simple wire up multiple rooms to plug the device into. The Chair shared that she has been at every meeting for the new library in an attempt to ensure that the board rooms are wired.

MOVED by Ms. Mary Newcombe, seconded by Ms. Lisa Pottie, that the Committee recommend the purchase of the appropriate equipment for Ms. Bryant. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE – May 14, 2012

The next meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is scheduled for Monday, May 14, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. in "Duke Room 1" on the 3rd Floor of Duke Tower, 5251 Duke Street, Halifax.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support

INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Further to a request from at the March meeting, copies of the HRM Crosswalk Safety brochure were before the Committee for their information.