

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

May 14, 2012

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

REGRETS: Troy Nauffts

STAFF: 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” on the 3rd floor, Duke Tower, 5251 Duke Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 16, 2012

MOVED by Councillor Wile, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal, that the minutes of April 16, 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 General Committee Discussion

The Committee agreed to move presentation 6.3.1 up on the agenda to the next order of business.

MOVED by Councillor Wile, seconded by Mr. Tom Boyd, that the agenda be approved, as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

6.3 Presentation

6.3.1 Planning & Design Centre – Argyle Streetscape Project

A handout entitled Argyle Streetscape was before the Committee.

Ms. Ali Shaver and Mr. Daniel Scott work with the Planning and Design Centre and they are working on a streetscape plan for Argyle Street, with the Downtown Halifax Business Commission. They have already held two public meetings to develop the design plans.

Ms. Cynthia Bryant and Mr. Darren Young arrived at 4:07 pm.

Ms. Shaver and Mr. Scott reviewed the history of the initiative , which has been ongoing since 1997.

Ms. Lisa Pottie arrived at 4:09 pm.

Recently, the Planning and Design Centre was asked to initiate a public engagement process to obtain public input from the broader HRM community for design purposes and to create a momentum which would assist in the long awaited implementation. At the first meeting on April 11th some guiding principals were decided upon and a design was created following that meeting. The traditional mechanisms separating pedestrians

from vehicles, curbs, have been removed and replaced with alternative means of separating vehicles from pedestrians. These have the potential to be a positive change and also pose challenges when it comes to accessibility. Ms. Shaver explained that because of this the Planning & Design Centre was very interested in discussing their current draft plan with the Committee before presenting their design at a meeting on June 4th.

Supt. Falkenham asked if the plans had been assessed with a CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) audit. When Ms. Shaver informed him that there had not been a CPTED audit conducted, a number of Committee members strongly suggested that they proceed with one. Ms. Pottie said that she would get the details of the audit to the Planning & Design Centre.

Ms. Shaver and Mr. Scott reviewed the principles that have been identified behind the project, which are to:

1. Establish permanence
2. Prioritize pedestrians
3. Allow for multiple uses based on time of day and year
4. Make the street a destination in and of itself
5. Create a beautiful street that should "sparkle and glow"

Mr. Scott explained that the second public meeting was held on May 7th, and incorporated ideas from the April 11th meeting. There was a great deal of positive feedback around the draft designs.

Ms. Shaver and Mr. Scott further discussed the design plans with the Committee.

Councillor Wile discussed Stephen Avenue in Calgary which is similar to the proposed plans. She explained that the challenge there is that food delivery services can only happen after 2am, and that this would pose a challenge on Argyle St., especially since its one way. Mr. Scott explained that this has been taken into consideration in the plans in terms of clearance. Ms. Shaver explained that they are currently working out the details with the various merchants around the timing and logistics of deliveries.

Ms. Pottie raised the issue that a number of traffic circulation issues already exist in downtown Halifax and that they should make sure that traffic experts examine these issues. She mentioned that this could end up being like Spark Street in Ottawa which has been a "dead street" since cars were removed.

Councillor Wile also noted that Stephen Ave. in Calgary has times when its open only to pedestrians. Mr. Scott explained that they had been considering this for Argyle Street.

Mr. Scott told the Committee that they are looking for feedback on meeting accessibility needs in this unique design plan. Ms. Horwill said that they would especially have to take into consideration visually impaired individuals. Mr. Boyd noted that visually

impaired individuals often use curbs as tools to avoid mistakenly walking into traffic. He also noted that altering the street for various activities could pose a challenge for individual impairments, who function better in environments that are set up the same way consistently. Ms. Newcombe noted that brick is a bad material to use for individuals with mobile impairments because it gets very slippery in the rain and can cause issues depending on how the bricks are spaced.

Mr. Boyd had concerns about large firetrucks having access to Argyle Street given the number of high rise buildings and volume of individuals. There could also be issues around the time it takes for emergency vehicles to assess and load patients and the Access-A-Bus would need to be able to access the street and have a place to park. Passengers of the Access-A-Bus would require a flat surface to get on and off the bus. Councillor Blumenthal suggested that it would be a good idea to have a designated Access-A-Bus stop on the street.

Mr. Boyd noted that the exit from the Marriot parking lot is poorly situated in the plans and that cars would have to go the wrong way down the street when they come out of the parking lot. Ms. Shaver explained that they are interested in exploring this issue and plan to put ballards down Argyle St. roughly 15m to accommodate access to the parking lot.

The Chair suggested that Ms. Shaver get in touch with Mr. Pat Meagher to discuss the options and requirements around the Access-A-Bus.

Councillor Wile asked if they would have to move all of the fire hydrants which would be an expensive endeavour. Mr. Scott explained that they are attempting to design around these essential features that already exist but the details are still being worked out.

Ms. Pottie shared with the Committee that she believes that it is a beautiful idea that is embraced in many cities around the world which makes a lot of sense, the challenge lies in working out the logistics.

Supt Falkenham noted that if the Trade Centre puts its entrance on Argyle that this project will not be possible. Mr. Scott explained that the individual in charge of the Trade Centre project has been attending all of the meetings for this project and seems to be receptive of the ideas presented by the group.

Mr. Boyd explained that currently there are major issues with bicycle parking in downtown Halifax. Mr. Scott explained that they have incorporated well-placed, permanent bicycle racks in the permanent infrastructure.

Councillor Wile noted the issue of snow removal and the fact that nothing will be separated without the curb.

The Chair thanked Ms. Shaver and Mr. Scott for attending. They encouraged the Committee to attend the next public meeting scheduled for June 4th from 6-8:00 p.m. at Neptune Theatre.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Update – Emera Oval accessibility – *John Henry, Community & Recreation Services*

Mr. Henry was unable to attend the meeting and will be placed on the agenda for next month.

4.2 Planning for Town Hall on Accessibility

A handout entitled “Talk with your city about accessibility!” was before the Committee.

Councillor Wile, Ms. Pottie, Mr. Nauffts and Ms. Bryant have worked out the details around the town hall meeting. The meeting is going to be in the multi-purpose room at the Bloomfield Centre on June 20th from 5:30 to 7:30pm. Invitations have been sent to HRM staff including Mr. Darren Young, Mr. Gordie Hayward and Mr. Taso Koutroulakis. Staff members will be doing a short presentation around what is being done around accessibility issues and then questions will be taken from the audience.

The Committee discussed whether or not Metro Transit should be invited. The organizers had planned on holding a separate meeting with Metro Transit in an attempt to keep the focus of the meeting on infrastructure issues, however, after the discussion it was decided that they should be invited. The Chair noted that she would invite Pat Meagher and also said that she would invite an individual from the police department to attend.

Invitations are currently being distributed to a number of organizations, Ms. Weagle has posted the invitation on the HRM website and Ms. Pottie has invited NSLEO, Disabled Persons Coalition and the Disability Strategy Partnership.

Councillor Wile explained that the Clerk’s Office has a sound system with two microphones that will be available for the meeting. There is a question around whether or not a portable microphone system could be obtained so that someone could walk the microphone around to individuals with mobility issues. Mr. Young asked if a lapel microphone would work well, and said that he would look into purchasing one. Mr. Young also noted that they could probably borrow the microphone system from the BMO building, which would simply plug into a phone jack.

5. NEW BUSINESS – None

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & PRESENTATIONS

6.1 Correspondence – None

6.2 Petitions - None

6.3 Presentations

6.3.1 Planning & Design Centre - Argyle Streetscape Project

This presentation was made earlier in the meeting. Refer to page 3.

7. REPORTS

7.1 Update on accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings

7.1.1 Staff Update

Mr. Young should have a hearing system for Ms. Bryant at the Committee meeting next month, he will be receiving a quote in the next few days. It is a portable loop system.

Mr. Young is working with procurement to do three standing offers: lever handles for doors, paddle handles for sinks, and strobe fire alarms.

Mr. Boyd noted how nice the door operators are in Alderney Landing.

In the update on Needham Centre Mr. Young advised that the tender for the lift closed and was awarded on Friday. Mr. Young received an air handling unit quote today and needs to examine it. The plumbing company was in the facility this week but has not provided a quote yet. Tactile signage is in production. The parking lot has not been addressed yet.

Mr. Boyd asked about doing tactile signage for the whole city. Mr. Young said that they are putting tactile signage into new buildings and it is being rolled out to existing facilities where funds allow.

When discussing the new Dartmouth bus terminal, Mr. Young explained to the Committee that he is looking for quotes to have warning strips at the crosswalk and bus stop locations. He is looking at a new product called a directional strip which channels individuals from location to location.

Ms. Pottie asked what the decision was to get across the street. Mr. Young explained that they will be putting in a new half signal to assist individuals in getting from the bus terminal to the shopping centre.

Inside the building they will have a similar channelling arrangement for individuals with brass inserted into the design of the floor.

7.1.2 Committee Member Update

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 General Committee Discussion

The Chair, Vice Chair and Mr. Young are going to Emergency Measures Office to compare notes with Mr. Barry Manuel on June 4th to see if they can help with any of the building assessments that they will be conducting as discussed last meeting.

Mr. Boyd shared that there is a meeting with Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia regarding accessibility on May 28th which the Chair and Vice Chair will be attending on behalf of the Committee.

The Chair noted that there is still a vacancy and that Committee members should encourage other individuals to apply. Mr. Boyd and Ms. Newcombe will not be with the Committee next year and Councillor Blumenthal will not be running again so there will be a number of vacancies to be filled on the Committee in the fall.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE – June 18, 2012

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support