

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

September 10, 2012

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

STAFF: Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, Human Resources  
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police  
Darren Young, Project Manager, Infrastructure & Asset  
Management  
Patrick Meagher, Accessible Transit Manager, Metro Transit  
Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant  
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor on Duke Tower, 5251 Duke Street, Halifax.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – July 16, 2012**

**MOVED by Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Wile, that the minutes of July 16, 2012 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

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

Troy Nauffts requested that agenda item 5.2 be changed from “Service Dogs” to “Service Animals”

The Committee agreed to address Item 7.1 Accessibility Plans for the Emera Oval – Staff Presentation as the first order of business following Committee Membership.

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

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

**4.1 Committee Membership**

**4.1.1 Upcoming Membership Expirations**

Accessibility Advisory Committee Membership List 2012 was before the Committee.

Jennifer Weagle explained that all Committee members have to re-apply if they would like to be re-appointed to the Committee and suggested that members apply now and have their applications held until the re-appointment occurs. Jennifer explained that members can be appointed for three consecutive terms and that two members, Mr. Tom Boyd and Ms. Mary Newcombe, have already reached their maximum appointments.

**4.1.2 Appointment of Representative to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee**

Information on the Active Transportation Advisory Committee appointment was before the Committee.

The Chair asked if any Committee members would be interested in representing the Accessibility Committee on the Active Transportation Committee. Cindy Bryant said that she would like to put her name forward.

**MOVED by Councillor Wile, seconded by Ms. Mary Newcombe, that Cindy Bryant be nominated as representative to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

### **7.1 Accessibility Plans for the Emera Oval – Staff Presentation**

A diagram of the proposed Emera Oval plans was distributed to the Committee.

Ms. Carolle Roberts, HRM Landscape Architect, explained that this fall the landscaping will be done around the oval including hardscaping around the outside of the plaza, along with some of the plaza areas on the north side. Ms. Roberts explained that a meeting is taking place tomorrow regarding moving the bus stop for the #6 bus to make it more accessible. She also discussed various options for accessible parking and bus stops based on the diagram in front of the Committee.

Mr. John Henry, Manager, Aquatic & Outdoor Services, Community & Recreation Services, noted that he met with Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, last week and at that time Mr. Rutt explained that the proposed accessible bus stop works well not just for the oval but also because of its proximity to Citadel High School.

Ms. Roberts explained that there will be unit pavers installed for the plaza and a smooth concrete transition right up to the oval which will serve a multitude of uses from addressing accessibility issues to roller blades.

Tom Boyd asked what consideration has been given to the Access-A-Bus drop off. Ms. Roberts explained that the bus stop area could be used along with two other zones that were labeled as drop off zones last year. The Chair noted how important this is because a rehab program would like to send their participants up to the Oval this coming year.

Mr. Boyd noted some issues with the gravel road and its exit point, Mr. Henry agreed.

Mary Wile asked how high the raised planters would be because it could be a concern for individuals with visual impairments. Ms. Roberts said that they are going to be approximately seat height and they will be concrete, she also noted that seats will be added eventually for individuals.

Troy Nauffts asked whether or not the concrete paths would be on a grid. Ms. Roberts said that it will be more of an open, paved surface with breaks for planters. Mr. Nauffts explained that it is very difficult for individuals who are visually impaired to navigate more open concept designs. Ms. Roberts explained that there will be inserts of black granite that will give a texture contrast to provide more of a guide. Mr. Nauffts noted that the paths from the entrance to the rink or other places need to be very distinctly marked. Mr. Rutt clarified that when moving around the oval you would be on one type of concrete and in the recreational, concession and seating areas there will be another type of concrete.

Councillor Wile noted that this did not seem to be the case at the entrance to the oval and suggested that the paths going to other areas be smooth pavements to avoid confusion for individuals with visual impairments. Ms. Roberts explained that a number of things may be changing and that this comment would be taken into consideration.

Brian Aird asked if it would be possible to provide a sheltered area for individuals waiting for the Access-A-Bus. Ms. Roberts noted that there is enough space in the design for a standard shelter by the bus shelter area.

Lisa Pottie suggested that there seems to be a lot of material shifts without consistency of what each material indicates for users.

Mr. Nauffts noted that while there are no buildings going up this year to consider and only trailers on site, a grid is extremely important for individuals with visual impairments. Ms. Roberts stated that the trailers are going to be on the left of the entrance, similar to where they were last year. There will be an office trailer and an equipment lending trailer as well as maintenance and speed skater changing trailers on the other side. Mr. Henry noted that the orientation will be modified this year to ensure that the equipment trailer is front and centre and accessible. Mr. Nauffts asked whether or not the revised trailer arrangement will allow staff be in a better position to see individuals who may be in need of assistance coming on to the property. Mr. Henry said that it will.

Mr. Henry noted that this season there will be an accessible ramp system leading up to the equipment trailer which was not on site last year.

Mr. Boyd asked where the concession stands would be this year. Ms. Roberts noted that there will be electrical around the planter units so the concession trailers will be around the planters. Mr. Boyd also asked whether or not the concession stands will have ramps. Mr. Henry explained that he has been doing research with various vendors both here in Nova Scotia and in Ontario and has discovered that it is extremely difficult to put a ramp system up to the mobile canteen units. He explained that alternatively the canteen staff will be very willing to come out and service individuals with accessibility issues, and that this could be included in the tender process this year. Mr. Rutt noted that he is accommodated at the Bud the Spud trailer located on Spring Garden Rd. regularly in this way. Mr. Henry noted that the two vendors that were on site last year did an excellent job at going out of their way to accommodate everyone's accessibility needs.

Mr. Nauffts asked whether or not the unit pavers could be reused and Ms. Roberts clarified that they are reusable.

Councillor Wile asked if coloured cement could be incorporated into the design, Ms. Roberts confirmed that coloured cement will be used in this design.

Mr. Henry raised the fact that the Committee had expressed a number of issues around the accessibility level of the washrooms and explained that this year they will be much more accessible with the hardscaping done. Mr. Henry also said that they are also looking into expanding the programming through community engagement and promoting the kinds of equipment and programming that is available. Mr. Henry also noted that Mr. Rutt came in to do some awareness training with their staff last winter. Mr. Rutt offered to make himself available again this year.

#### **4.2 Terminology and Language in Working with Persons with Disabilities – Troy Nauffts (deferred from July 16<sup>th</sup> meeting)**

An Etiquette Fact Sheet (Blind and Visually Impaired) was before the Committee.

Mr. Rutt read the Fact Sheet for the Committee and Mr. Nauffts added some suggestions. Mr. Nauffts stressed that individuals looking to assist individuals with disabilities need to ask what they are in need of before providing assistance.

### **5. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **5.1 Metro Transit Policy on Service Animals**

An email from the Chair regarding service animals on Metro Transit vehicles was before the Committee, along with two recent newspaper articles on the issue.

Mr. Meagher discussed the recent incident outlined in the newspaper article. Mr. Meagher explained that Metro Transit would never strand a passenger, and one of the supervisors transported this individual with her dog to her doctor's office.

Mr. Meagher explained that as long as the animal is a registered service animal that Metro Transit is happy to have them ride on their buses. Mr. Boyd asked how individuals go about registering their animal and he said that it is done through the National Service Dog Registration. Mr. Meagher said that he would email the Chair more information to distribute to the Committee.

Ms. Pottie noted that the dog owner has had a number of issues in registering her dog as a seizure dog. Ms. Pottie shared that she has worked with a number of individuals who have struggled to register their companion animals.

Supt. Falkenham suggested that information outlining the requirement for registration and the registration process be posted on their website so that everyone can access the information. Mr. Meagher explained that there are inconsistencies between their pamphlet and their website which they are currently working through. He said that once all of the details are worked out the information will be distributed appropriately.

Mr. Meagher distributed copies of the Metro Transit Riders' Guide to the Committee.

Mr. Boyd explained that if you go online to find information regarding registering your service animal there is a great deal of conflicting information.

Mr. Aird noted that registering a service dog may cost some money or be accompanied by literacy issues which could leave some individuals at a serious disadvantage. He encouraged Mr. Meagher to take this into consideration when developing the policy.

Ms. Bryant noted concern that the dog owner had ridden the bus with her dog a number of times without issue and had experienced a great deal of trouble getting her dog registered since it is not a registered service dog. Ms. Bryant noted that bus drivers have to be consistent when enforcing Metro Transit policies.

Mr. Nauffts asked whether or not the wording throughout Metro Transit documentation could be changed from "Service Dogs" to "Service Animals". Mr. Meagher explained that "Service Animals" is very concerning to Metro Transit since there are Service Ponies and Metro Transit will not be allowing ponies on their buses. Mr. Nauffts also asked what Metro Transit will be doing about disability training for drivers who have not received the training or who requires updated training. Mr. Meagher explained that they have been actively been training operators with sensitivity issues for the last eight years.

Mr. Young asked whether or not the collective agreement allows for continuous training, Mr. Meagher believes that it would.

Mr. Boyd conducted some research over the weekend with regards to service animals in various provinces. Ontario and British Columbia have an agency that registers service dogs and that owners need a letter from those agencies to be allowed to ride public buses. Mr. Boyd is concerned that there is no provincial body in Nova Scotia that certifies registered animals and suggested that the Committee requested the Transportation Standing Committee investigate this. Councillor Wile suggested that this would have to be a provincial initiative so that guidelines could be consistent across the province. She also suggested that a meeting with Doctors Nova Scotia would also be beneficial since some doctors charge a significant amount of money for doctor's notes.

Councillor Wile brought up issues around bus drivers with allergies to dogs and also passengers with allergies.

Mr. Meagher said that he would take the Committee's suggestions into consideration.

Mr. Nauffts passed around his Seeing Eye Dog Cards – both a Canadian and an American one – for the Committee to examine and consider.

Mr. Rutt noted that HRM would like to encourage all citizens to use the bus. Mr. Rutt believes, based on information coming from Canine Vision Canada ([dogguides.com](http://dogguides.com)), that a number of service dogs come from registered trainers which should be easy to be registered. Service dogs not coming from registered trainers seem to be the issue. He

would like to find a way for all individuals to ride the bus, including those with dogs, without discouraging other users from taking the bus.

Ms. Newcombe explained that this topic makes her nervous since she has extremely severe allergies to animals that impact her respiratory system. She noted that registered dogs are trained to stay by their owners, but the thought of riding the bus with non-registered animals makes her very nervous. Mr. Meagher noted that Metro Transit share these concerns, and also concerns around animal behavior and passenger safety.

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

### **6.1 Correspondence – None**

### **6.2 Petitions - None**

### **6.3 Presentation - None**

## **7. REPORTS**

### **7.1 Accessibility Plans for the Emera Oval – Staff Presentation**

This item was dealt with earlier on the agenda. Refer to page 4.

### **7.2 Update on Accessibility Assessment of HRM Owned/Operated Buildings**

#### **7.2.1 Staff Update**

Mr. Young noted that he has been very busy working on the Bridge Terminal project over the summer and emphasized that there are a number of accessibility features going into the terminal. He also informed the Committee that he is trying to schedule a date for a Committee tour of the new terminal before it opens.

Door operators (8) are up at the Sackville Stadium and they will be made operational this weekend. At the Needham Centre, everything is up and running except for the main elevator which should be running and with an appropriate permit shortly.

The Chair asked that Mr. Young give the Committee an update at the next meeting on the Committee's role, whether they should be out looking at buildings on the list or if they should still be looking for buildings to assess.

Ms. Bryant asked about the status of the ramp at the side of the Sackville public library since she has not seen any change. Mr. Young said that he would follow up with the individual responsible for the project.



### **7.2.2 Committee Member Update**

The Chair informed the Committee that she is going to attend the meeting with Metro Transit at 10am tomorrow (Tuesday September 11<sup>th</sup>) morning regarding the Oval and will email the Committee to update them following the meeting.

Mr. Boyd noted that the Taxi and Limousine Liaison Committee has been discussing implementing Medallion Standards from across Canada here in Nova Scotia. Troy shared a story with the Committee about a taxi driver recently attempting to refuse to drive him and his service dog. Since the driver did not have a doctor's note stating his allergy he was told by dispatch to take Troy and his dog to their destination.

### **8. ADDED ITEMS – None**

### **9. NEXT MEETING DATE – October 15, 2012**

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 15, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. in meeting room 'Duke 1', 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Duke Tower, 5251 Duke Street, Halifax.

### **10. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Jenny Benson  
Legislative Support

### **INFORMATION ITEMS**

1. The Play Book – A Guide to Sport & Recreation Opportunities for People with Disabilities was before the Committee.
2. Accessibility Advisory Committee Internal Contact Information was before the Committee.
3. Inside HRM employee newsletter article “Volunteers for a More Accessible Community” by Laughie Rutt was before the Committee.