

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

January 21, 2013

PRESENT: Theresa Horwill, Chair  
Tom Boyd, Vice Chair  
Troy Nauffts  
Cynthia Bryant  
Marie Aitken  
Lisa Pottie  
Mary Newcombe  
Councillor Jennifer Watts  
Mayor Mike Savage, Ex-Officio

REGRETS: Brian Aird

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

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m. in Halifax Hall on the main floor of City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 3, 2013**

**MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Ms. Lisa Pottie, that the minutes of December 3, 2012 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

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

The Committee agreed to move item 6.1 Presentation – Accessibility Map for HRM to the beginning of the agenda.

Additions:

- 8.1 Disability Awareness Training – *Laughlin Rutt, HRM Diversity Consultant*
- 8.2 Election of Chair and Vice Chair – *Chair*
- 8.3 Development of Strategic Five Year Plan – *Councillor Watts*
- 8.4 Sidewalk Standards – *Councillor Watts*

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

**6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & PRESENTATIONS**

**6.1 Presentation – Accessibility Map for HRM – *Jamie Newman***

A brief on the proposed Accessibility Map for HRM was before the Committee.

Mr. Jamie Newman began his presentation by explaining that he is presenting to the Committee as a policy consultant not as a promoter for any particular software company. He began by stating that his presentation would address what the map is, why it's a good resource, and how to go about utilizing it.

Mr. Newman explained that the product is a digital map, like Google maps, which can be used to navigate the community, alleviate travel anxiety and access where you are going either by a mobile app or at home. The map is adaptable and can be used to plan trips by typing in your current address and your destination which will prompt the map to suggest routes for you. The issue with Google maps is that while they have maps all over the world they are lacking depth. This is where the accessibility map comes in to assist the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Mr. Newman noted that a key feature of the map is that it allows each individual to choose the features that they find most useful to them. Things like disabled washrooms, textured sidewalks, quality of sidewalks, lifts and other features that the Committee discusses on a monthly basis.

Mr. Newman further explained that another important feature is the crowd-sourced feature which allows users to interact with the resource and describe exactly what issue or benefit they have encountered in a very detailed way (e.g. there is an accessible washroom on the second floor of a particular building to the left of the elevators).

Councillor Watts asked for clarification around whether or not Mr. Newman would be providing the background information to the crowd-sourcing component, allowing the public to populate the map more. Mr. Newman explained that the information provided originally will have to be substantial and useful in order to encourage use and then the users will be the key to the crowd-sourcing aspect.

Ms. Pottie asked how the data would be checked to ensure businesses in HRM do not promote themselves as accessible when they are not, how to ensure the integrity of the data. Mr. Newman indicated that there could be a controller that would verify who was inputting the data and fact check it with the various businesses. Mr. Newman also explained that there would be a disclaimer explaining how the data in the map is collected so users would understand what was happening with the resource.

Mr. Newman commented that this resource would help HRM make decisions on prioritization of accessibility issues based on detailed feedback from the individuals facing those issues.

Mr. Newman reviewed the four phases of the project:

- Phase 1: Assessing Needs
- Phase 2: Developing Solutions
- Phase 3: Early Users and Testing
- Phase 4: Maintenance and Promotion

The Committee discussed the possibilities around the proposal.

Mr. Boyd said that Rick Hansen has been promoting a similar type of application, [planat.com](http://planat.com). Mr. Boyd also mentioned that a company in Fredericton has been working on software that outlines exactly where construction is happening in the city to allow individuals to avoid construction in their travel routes. It was designed especially for first responders who need to move around as efficiently as possible.

Councillor Watts thanked Mr. Newman for coming and opening the Committee's eyes to some of the opportunities that this technology could provide. She asked how Mr. Newman sees the relationship between the technology and HRM working. Mr. Newman said that funding would be required from HRM to do the research phase and the rest of the funding requirements would fall out of the information gathered during the research

phase. The Councillor suggested that if HRM was not able to provide funding hopefully they would be able to point him in the right direction.

Councillor Watts also asked whether or not Mr. Newman has the information he needs from HRM, he explained that he would need some data sets from HRM such as sidewalk ratings and construction whereabouts. The Councillor said that construction services would probably have to be input regularly as opposed to a data set because its evolving but that other useful data sets would most likely be available.

Mr. Boyd said that Mr. Newman should consider tapping into the tourist industry also since many of the tourists who come off of cruise ships in HRM are elderly and in need of this type of information before arriving in Halifax.

The Chair thanked Mr. Newman for coming.

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

##### **4.1 Service Animal Policy**

Information regarding the Application for Service Animal Identification Card for Individuals with Disabilities, a copy of the application and a sample Service Animal Identification Card were before the Committee.

Mr. Meagher presented to the Committee the final draft of the Service Animal Policy. He explained to the Committee that he had researched and contacted various jurisdictions with similar policies, mostly focussing on the policy in New York.

Ms. Pottie expressed concerns around the lack of a definition of 'service animal'. Mr. Meagher explained that in all of the jurisdictions that were looked at there was no definition that could be applied to this case.

Councillor Watts clarified that not everyone needed to carry a card for their service animal but if you wished to have a card you could apply. Mr. Meagher confirmed that the card would not be required, simply an option for individuals who believe that they may have issues being accompanied by their service animals. At the request of Councillor Watts, Mr. Meagher advised that Metro Transit staff initiated the establishment of a Service Animal ID card.

Mr. Meagher explained that the wording for the application has come from the sub-committee and Metro Transit, while the wording for the card actually came from New York.

The Mayor joined the Committee meeting at 4:50 pm.

Coucillor Watts noted the need to emphasize that attaining a card for your service animal would be optional and voluntary. She asked whether or not the application could

be made more accessible by allowing individuals to return their applications by email. Mr. Nauffts noted that the digital version of the form should be accessible.

Mr. Rutt noted concern that this process is creating an additional step that is not required for a regular transit user. Mr. Meagher stated that this is the reasoning behind making this completely optional and voluntary. Ms. Pottie commented that at this point individuals need to have their animals in a cage and attaining a service card would allow the animal to use Metro Transit services without a cage.

Mr. Nauffts explained that the process outlined has the potential to be problematic because the dogs are not being certified by a known school. Mr. Meagher explained that they were unable to locate a known school to help in this process.

Ms. Bryant asked how this would relate to the case that the Committee discussed a few meetings ago with the lady with epilepsy. The Committee discussed how this would allow an individual like her to apply for a Service Animal Identification Card which would allow her to ride the bus with her dog, not leaving it up to the discretion of the driver.

**MOVED by Ms. Marie Aitken, seconded by Ms. Mary Newcombe, that the Committee accept the wording as written on the Application for Service Animals and the Service Animal Identification Card. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

The Chair asked that Mr. Meagher keep the Committee in the loop going forward.

**5. NEW BUSINESS – None**

**6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & PRESENTATIONS**

**6.1 Presentation – Accessibility Map for HRM – *Jamie Newman***

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

**7. REPORTS**

**7.1 Update on Emera Oval Accessibility**

An Emera Oval Accessibility update sheet was before the Committee.

The Chair explained that there continue to be a number of issues with the Emera Oval and brought a slideshow of photos to share with the Committee to assist in demonstrating these issues.

The Chair informed the Committee that Mr. John Henry, Coordinator with HRM Community & Recreation Services, is in attendance to help address any concerns regarding the Oval.

Mr. Henry advised that the new location of the bus stop will be completed on the evening of Tuesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>. Mr. Boyd said that he would like the high school students to be notified that their bus stop is changing locations, Mr. Henry said that signs have been put up to inform them. The Chair explained that she hopes the signage for the new bus stop will also be up tomorrow when the bus starts running its new route. The Chair asked whether or not the pad would be out to assist individuals with disabilities and Mr. Henry said that he was not sure.

The Chair showed a photo of a vehicle parked too close to the crosswalk, making it dangerous for pedestrians. Mr. Henry advised that he walked through the site with other staff and examined the crosswalk in question and said a number of changes are being made as a result. There is going to be more parking on North Park Street, the new bus stop and accessible parking. The signage for the crosswalk is being changed as soon as the bus stop is moved.

The Chair noted that there have been a number of issues with individuals parking in Accessible Parking spots without the appropriate permits. Councillor Watts noted that she heard that police and parking enforcement have been ticketing. Supt. Falkenham made the point that no matter how many signs are put up individuals will still park in places that they are not permitted to.

The Chair showed a photo of the curb cut where the new bus stop would be going and Mr. Boyd discussed some issues around the cut and location. There were a number of barriers such as garbage bins, picnic benches and vehicles for wheelchairs to negotiate but John Henry said that there was plenty of room for individuals to manoeuvre. Mr. Boyd also mentioned that the contrast is very good and will assist individuals who are blind or have visual impairments.

The Chair clarified with Mr. Henry that if individuals with accessibility issues call ahead that an individual will meet them when they are dropped off in order to assist them.

The Chair raised the issue of sandwich board signs at the Oval, noting that Spring Garden Rd. has become difficult to navigate for individuals with vision impairments as a result of the number of sandwich boards and that the Committee has discussed this issues many times. Mr. Boyd suggested that the sandwich boards be located closer to the poles at the Oval. Mr. Henry explained that the sandwich boards that have been erected by the Oval are very heavy duty and will not fall over the way that others might. Mr. Henry advised that he would ask the food truck vendors at the Oval to mount their sandwich boards on the side of their trailers to get them off of the ground since they can be knocked tripped over at this point. The Chair noted that the Committee has been told a number of times that the policy around sandwich boards is under review but the Committee has not heard anything finite back.

The Chair showed the Committee a photo of the accessible washroom at the Oval. Both the Chair and Mr. Henry have received positive feedback about the washroom and

its location. Mr. Boyd expressed concern that there is no sign on it stating that it is accessible. Mr. Henry stated that he would follow up on the sign.

The Chair and Vice Chair expressed concerns regarding where the school buses park and how long they park there for. Mr. Henry suggested that the buses could drop the children off, pull away and park elsewhere until they were finished skating. Ms. Newcombe thought that the Committee had discussed a location for school buses to park. Mr. Henry clarified that in the newer plans the ability for buses to park is no longer available. It was brought up that the buses idle while waiting for the children and Supt. Falkenham explained that they may not have a choice.

The Mayor left the meeting at 5:28 p.m.

Ms. Newcombe asked whether or not there is a place for individuals in wheelchairs to leave their chairs while they are skating at the Oval. Mr. Henry explained that this was definitely possible, that individuals would just need to inform a staff member that they would like to store their chair somewhere and also stated that there is lots of room for such storage.

Councillor Watts encouraged Committee members to come out for public consultations regarding the Oval, Mr. Henry stated that they are looking at having the next meeting in sometime in the next five weeks at the Atlantica. Mr. Henry explained that the gantries will be replaced by more permanent signs with electronic signage that will include information about Oval activities and hours.

The Chair and Vice Chair stated how fantastic the ramp looks going up to the oval trailer.

Mr. Henry explained to the Committee that an emphasis around accessibility was inserted into the tender for vendors, so all vendors at the Oval understand the need to accommodate individuals with accessibility needs and they have also been provided training.

The Committee thanked Mr. Henry for attending. Mr. Henry will forward details of an upcoming Emera Oval public engagement meeting to the Committee.

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

### **7.2.2 Committee Member Update – Musquodoboit Harbour Area Facilities – *Chair and Vice Chair***

The Chair showed the Committee a number of photos of the Mooseland fire hall/community hall to emphasize the needs of the facility and help explain why the local community association is asking HRM for the funds for an accessible washroom. Councillor David Hendsbee has given the facility funds from his discretionary fund to install a lift in but he does not have money to re-do the washroom. Given this



contribution and the fact that the facility has a helicopter pad for medical emergencies as well as fire services, the Chair believes that this would be a fitting upgrade for the facility.

The Chair and Vice Chair also visited the library in the area and showed photos to the Committee. She said that it has a good size library and Ms. Pottie stated that she lives in the area and it is a very busy library. She said that it would be beneficial if plugs could be installed in the floor for individuals to plug in their own laptops since the library only has three computers.

Mr. Boyd explained that the main counter in the library was too high and part of it should be lowered to be accessible. The Chair thought that the washrooms were a good size and in good condition, Mr. Boyd pointed out that they are missing the bar and the paper towel dispenser is too high.

Mr. Boyd stated that there is no door operator so the librarian has to prop the door open. The Chair showed a picture of the only accessible parking spot, Ms. Pottie said that it would be easy to paint another. Mr. Boyd said there are also issues with water pooling and icing over at the foot of the wheelchair ramp which could be fixed by moving the downspout. There is a small bathroom at the back of the building behind the gym section that the facility could knock the wall out of to make it accessible.

Mr. Young advised he received a quote on the Mooseland fire hall/community hall facility that was under \$6,000.

Councillor Watts asked whether or not there was an existing budget line for this and Mr. Young explained that there is an existing budget for accessibility upgrades for all HRM facilities and that this would fit into it.

Ms. Bryant asked whether or not this project was on the Committee's priority facility list. The Chair explained that when Councillor Hendsbee provided funding for the lift he suggested that the Committee examine the rest of the funding requirements.

Councillor Watts clarified that this project would be around \$6,000. Mr. Young confirmed that it is. Councillor Watts asked whether or not other avenues had been considered for this project and Mr. Young explained that they had but application deadlines for any other options for this year have already passed.

**MOVED by Ms. Lisa Pottie, seconded by Mr. Troy Nauffts, that the Committee recommend funding the construction of an accessible washroom and, if needed, provide funding assistance for the lift in the Mooseland fire hall/community hall.  
MOTION PUT AND PASSED**

#### **7.2.1 Staff Update**

Mr. Young provided a brief overview of all of the projects that have been completed since he began working with the Committee. Among many things, he informed the Committee that he has arranged the installation of 54 door operators, completed a number of washroom upgrades, installed pool lifts, installed tactile signage, installed over 30 tactile indication services, and put in over 1200 ft. of directional strips at the ferry terminal.

Three projects for consideration this year are making the ground floor of the Dingle Tower accessible, Chocolate Lake and Cunard Pond.

Mr. Young explained that the big aspects of the top ten buildings have been taken care of with details continuing to be worked out. There are various reasons why some of the projects have not been addressed.

Ms. Bryant noted she has been bringing forward accessibility issues with the Sackville Public Library for two years, and nothing has been done about it. The Chair explained that someone else was supposed to take it this project and that did not happen, and that it will be addressed in the spring.

Mr. Boyd asked how much of the \$300,000 in the accessibility upgrade budget would be designated to the three priorities. Mr. Young advised that staff are planning to spend \$100,000 between now and April on accessibility upgrades.

The Chair stated that the curling club in Lower Sackville does not have a door operator. Mr. Young said that he had put in a requisition for it last year. Mr. Rutt said that there is no operator to get out onto the ice surface. Mr. Young said that he has done eleven door operators in the facility and committed to look into it.

The Chair asked Mr. Young about what is happening with the two accessible parking spots at the St. Mary's boathouse. Mr. Young explained that there are a number of requests in for alterations to the building and the parking spots will be examined as part of the bigger project.

### **7.3 Committee Member Updates**

#### **7.3.1 Active Transportation Advisory Group – Ms. Cynthia Bryant**

No update provided.

#### **7.3.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – Mr. Tom Boyd, Vice Chair**

Mr. Boyd explained that the Group has not met.

### **8. ADDED ITEMS**

#### **8.1 Disability Awareness Training - Laughlin Rutt, HRM Diversity Consultant**

This item was deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints.

## **8.2 Election of Chair and Vice Chair - *Chair***

The Chair noted that the Committee was supposed to hold the annual election of Chair and Vice Chair at today's meeting but were asked to defer the vote to the next meeting to allow for new members to be appointed. Volunteer applications will be considered by the Transportation Standing Committee later this week, to make recommendation to Regional Council for appointment. The Chair stated that she will not be re-offering as Chair or as Vice Chair for the next year. She has re-offered to stay on the Committee but not in either of those roles.

## **8.3 Development of a Strategic Five Year Plan – *Councillor Watts***

Councillor Watts proposed that the Committee discuss developing a strategic plan for the Committee that will include an educational component, identification of accessibility opportunities and challenges, and priority and goal setting in the framework of a five year plan.

Ms. Pottie noted that there would have to be budget allocations for education, and that the mandate of the Committee may have to be broadened to include internal and external education.

**MOVED by Ms. Lisa Pottie, seconded by Mr. Troy Nauffts that the Accessibility Advisory Committee develop a strategic five year plan that will include an educational component, identification of accessibility opportunities and challenges, and priority and goal setting in the framework of a five year plan. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

## **8.4 Sidewalk Standards – *Councillor Watts***

Councillor Watts proposed that the Committee request Traffic Services to present to the Committee on the status of sidewalk standards in HRM and implications for accessibility for HRM residents.

The Councillor explained the importance of the Committee considering this issue, noting concern that there needs to be more of a policy direction from Council around sidewalk standards, rather than the guidelines that are currently in place.

Councillor Watts explained that she thought it would be a good discussion to have amongst the Committee since the discussion at the Council level on this issue was not wholesome. She also noted that this discussion could also encompass the Committee's comments and concerns around sandwich boards in HRM.

Mr. Boyd said that there are streets and sidewalks in HRM that are not remotely conducive to individuals who are visually impaired.

**MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Ms. Lisa Pottie that the Accessibility Advisory Committee request Traffic Services to present to the Committee on the status of sidewalk standards in HRM and implications for accessibility for HRM residents. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**9. NEXT MEETING DATE – February 18, 2013**

The next meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is scheduled for Monday, February 18, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, main floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:21 p.m.

Jenny Benson  
Legislative Support

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**INFORMATION ITEMS**

1. Bayers Lake Transit Corridor – Update (*information report to the Transportation Standing Committee dated October 31, 2012*)