

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

March 18, 2013

PRESENT:

Mayor Mike Savage  
Councillor Jennifer Watts  
Councillor Steve Craig  
Lisa Pottie, Chair  
Theresa Horwill  
Tom Boyd  
Patricia Gates  
Yvon Clement  
Bob Hayter  
Cynthia Bryant  
Krista Daley  
Mark MacKenzie

REGRETS:

Marie Aitken

STAFF:

Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, HRM Human Resources  
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police  
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 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall on the Main Floor of City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – February 18, 2013**

An amendment to the February 13, 2013 minutes was noted, that the approval of Ms. Theresa Horwill as Vice-Chair was moved by Councillor Watts.

**MOVED by Mr. Bob Hayter, seconded by Ms. Theresa Horwill, that the minutes of February 18, 2013 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

The Committee asked that the Universal Public Library Access sheet be circulated to the Committee before the April meeting. The Committee also agreed to have a verbal attendance added to the beginning of every meeting agenda so that individuals with visual impairments can know who is in the room.

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

**MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Ms. Theresa Horwill, that the agenda be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

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

**4.1 Strategic Planning Workshop**

The Agenda for the Facilitated Session for the Accessibility Advisory Committee was before the Committee. The Terms of Reference for the AAC were also before the Committee.

The Chair introduced Ms. Marilyn Smith and Mr. Darren Hirtle from HRM Volunteer Services, who joined the Committee to facilitate the Strategic Planning Workshop.

Ms. Smith had each Committee member share their name, what accessibility means to them and also what accessibility means to the citizens HRM in their opinion. A number of members noted that accessibility means independence, freedom, safety and the ability to participate in civic life. It also means equality and access to buildings and services. Most Committee members noted that for the citizens of HRM accessibility would mean something different to each person.

Ms. Smith gave each table a topic: Understanding the Roles and Responsibilities of the AAC, Current AAC Structure, and Impact to HRM Regional Council and Public. Each table was given a list of four questions to answer in relation to their topic:

1. What is working well for the current AAC?
2. What improvements are required?
3. What do you see as challenges?
4. What steps can you take to make the necessary improvements?

Below is a summary of responses to each question under each topic:

### **What is working well for the current AAC?**

#### **Understanding the Roles and Responsibilities of the AAC**

The Committee listed a number of things that are going well with regards to roles and responsibilities. They focused on the hard work and dedication of Committee members and staff as well as positive feedback from HRM staff and citizens.

#### **Current AAC Structure**

Things working well in the Committee structure included participation in other committees, good dialogue with HRM staff, great Councillor involvement and issues raised by the Committee being addressed in a timely manner. Members also saw the networking that the structure allows to be working well.

#### **Impact to HRM Regional Council and Public**

When discussing the impact of the Committee, members discussed the Committee's long list of accomplishments including changes they have made in both HRM infrastructure and policy.

### **What Improvements are Required?**

#### **Understanding the Roles and Responsibilities of the AAC**

Areas that were identified by members for improvement were around the length of time it takes for Accessibility Committee issues to be addressed at the Transportation Standing Committee and also communication issues between various committees as well as Council. There was also discussion around proposed by-laws needing to be sent to the Accessibility Committee for feedback.

#### **Current AAC Structure**

The Committee discussed a need to develop formalized representation on other committees and staff involvement. Members also wondered why the Accessibility Committee reports to the Transportation Standing Committee on issues that are not related to transportation.

#### **Impact to HRM Regional Council and Public**

With regards to improving the impact on the public, Committee members had specific suggestions such as painting crosswalks and addressing sidewalk encroachment issues. Committee members were not sure what the impact of the Committee is on

Council because they do not report to Council. The Committee is also unaware of the impact on the public due to a lack of mandate or resources for public education.

### **What do you see as challenges?**

#### **Understanding the Roles and Responsibilities of the AAC**

The challenges that were identified around the roles and responsibilities included a lack of communication to staff, Council and all stakeholders; time and resources; and a number of items listed in the Terms of Reference that neither the Committee nor Council has acted on. Members noted that there is no onus on the business units to bring potential issues forward to the Committee so by the time the Committee is presented with an issue it is already fully developed.

#### **Current AAC Structure**

The Committee's lack of authority to compel and budget restrictions were identified as challenges.

#### **Impact to HRM Regional Council and Public**

Lack of education and finances, the age of the city, and the cost of accessibility to the public were identified as challenges.

### **What steps can you take to make the necessary improvements?**

#### **Understanding the Roles and Responsibilities of the AAC**

Committee members thought that educating the business units about the Committee and its mandate could have a large impact. It was suggested that the Chair request permission to make a presentation at a senior management meeting about the Committee and the role it could play with business units. It was also suggested that a brochure be created to assist in getting information out to the public, business units and other stakeholders explaining the role of the Committee.

Members thought that it would be a good idea to go through the Committee's Terms of Reference and responsibilities each year when new members are appointed. Finally, the Accessibility Committee would like to be added to the "Who to Call" HRM advertising and the 3-1-1 initiative. This would require the creation a staff position to liaise between the Committees and send information to community members.

All members agreed that the Committee should look into what other jurisdictions are doing because they usually include a position like this.

#### **Current AAC Structure**

The Committee asked for clarification around how it was decided that the Accessibility Advisory Committee would report to the Transportation Standing Committee and also requested information regarding how issues that are not addressed by the Transportation Standing Committee are decided.

The Mayor thanked the Committee for all of their hard work and all of the changes that they have made over the last few years and asked the Committee to push Council to make decisions around increasing accessibility for citizens of HRM. He left the meeting at 5:58 pm.

### **Impact to HRM Regional Council and Public**

Members thought that improving communication through the website and mobile applications, especially regarding construction, would be a good start. They also suggested updating by-laws; holding a town hall with an education focus; including other levels of government in the discussions; and being included under 3-1-1. Councillor Watts suggested that a cross-jurisdictional review of what other municipalities are doing could be done through the Mayor's office.

### **Priorities**

Mr. Hirtle suggested that the Committee prioritize their items in order of moving forward and then discuss them in-depth at a later meeting.

The Committee agreed that it requires more information around best practices as soon as possible and would like the Mayor's office to conduct a review across multiple jurisdictions to find out how other committees are structured and what their mandates are. Councillor Watts believes that the Mayor's Office would support this request and will approach the Mayor on this.

The Committee requested some clarification from the Clerk's office around different reporting mechanisms and processes and how this Committee could go about changing its reporting structure.

The Committee intends to educate itself on HRM by-laws and request that by-laws should come to the Committee for comment. Councillor Watts suggested the Committee request an individual from Transportation and Public Works come to a Committee Meeting to discuss encroachment issues. This could set up a model for HRM staff in terms of the function and role of the Committee. Committee members requested that someone from Transportation and Public works attend the next meeting.

The Committee discussed familiarizing themselves more with the Terms of Reference and taking action on the items included or revise them to better reflect the realized role of the Committee.

Committee members expressed frustration over repeatedly providing recommendations and not having them accepted.

Mr. Hirtle suggested that the Committee start by deciding on a definition of 'accessibility' and build their priorities out from there. Councillor Watts suggested a specific discussion around the definition of accessibility take place at the next meeting. It was agreed that it

would be good for the Committee to establish a working definition for the next few years.

The Committee wishes to investigate the idea of educating the public further.

The Committee discussed having further internal education. The Chair suggested that this could provide an opportunity for the Committee to network with other organizations. A different organization could come in and present for 15 minutes at each meeting. Ms. Patricia Gates volunteered that she (representing CCB) and Mr. Yvon Clement can talk to the Committee for the first presentation. The Chair informed the Committee that she would bring the Disability Partnership List to the next meeting.

Mr. Rutt suggested that the Committee needs to finalize who they are and what they do before they consider educating the public.

Councillor Watts suggested making the website more interactive because it could be developed to speak more to who the Committee is and what they are doing.

5. **CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATION** – None
6. **REPORTS /DISCUSSION** – None
7. **ADDED ITEMS** - None
8. **NEXT MEETING DATE** – April 15, 2013

The next meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is scheduled for Monday, April 15, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, main floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Jenny Benson  
Legislative Support