

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

April 15, 2013

PRESENT:

Lisa Pottie, Chair
Theresa Horwill, Vice Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Steve Craig
Patricia Gates
Yvon Clement
Bob Hayter
Cynthia Bryant
Krista Daley
Mark MacKenzie

REGRETS:

Tom Boyd

STAFF:

Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, HRM Human Resources
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Darren Young, Project Manager, HRM Planning & Infrastructure
Patrick Meagher, Accessible Transit Manager, Metro Transit
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, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – March 18, 2013

MOVED by Mr. Bob Hayter, seconded by Ms. Krista Daley, that the minutes of March 18, 2013 be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

- 7.1 Traffic Improvements to North Park Street (roundabouts) - update
- 7.2 CNIB Larry Uteck Roundabout Walk
- 7.3 Bayers Lake Accessibility - update
- 7.4 Regional Plan Review

MOVED by Ms. Theresa Horwill, seconded by Ms. Cindy Bryant, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Encroachments & Sidewalk Cafes – Christopher Davis, P. Eng., Traffic & Right-of-Way Services

Mr. Christopher Davis, Acting HRM Right-of-Way Manager, presented to the Committee on the topic of encroachments and sidewalk cafes. He stated that he would present background information around the Sidewalk Standards in HRM and discuss the Committee's concerns about them. Mr. Davis brought printed copies of his presentation for Committee members and offered to distribute the presentation electronically following the meeting.

On January 15, 2013 a request for a permanent encroachment at 5131 Morris Street in Halifax was discussed at Council. The request created concerns among some Councillors and the community regarding this project in particular and sidewalk encroachments in general.

Mr. Davis discussed HRM's sidewalk guidelines which are based on the Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) Guidelines for sidewalk design. The TAC Guidelines were developed with national contributors and as a tool for policy makers.

HRM's "Red Book" is the service systems guidelines and includes 24 different types of cross streets. New streets are built based on more ideal guidelines whereas the existing streets can pose a number of challenges.

The 2.1 metre guideline first appeared in the HRM Capital District Urban Design Project in 2004. Before this design was released HRM was using 2.1m as a minimum for sidewalk café designs which would allow two people or one wheel chair to pass unencumbered. Sandwich boards are only allowed to be used in Furnishing and Service Zone or Frontage Zone and there still has to be 2.1m of clear space for pedestrians.

The Committee wondered whether or not there was active enforcement of the regulations around sandwich boards. Mr. Davis and Councillor Watts explained that enforcement is complaint-driven.

Mr. Yvon Clement stated that at the corner of North and King Streets in Halifax there is very little clearance to walk on the sidewalk by the coffee shop which makes it difficult for him to navigate. Mr. Davis told Mr. Clement that when Java Blend sets up its' patio this summer HRM staff will go and measure the clearance. The Committee was informed that individuals should report these types of complaints to the HRM Call Centre at 3-1-1.

Mr. Davis also shared with the Committee that any business that has sandwich boards pays an \$80 encroachment fee to cover the costs of processing the application and having HRM staff do a site visit to measure the space. Many businesses are not licensed and those that are will have a sticker on their board.

Councillor Watts explained that small businesses in HRM are trying to increase their business and sandwich boards are a part of that effort so there are two sides to the issue.

In response to the Committee's questions around liability, Mr. Davis said that the businesses that are licensed have to have liability insurance in case there are injuries resulting from sandwich board placement or encroachment.

Mr. Davis explained that permanent encroachments within the public street right of way require Regional Council approval including staircases and window wells. HRM staff receive requests for permanent encroachments and prepare reports to Council. They must consider the 2.1m guideline along with any planned future use of the right of way; impacts of granting the encroachment today and in the future; and how the public will be impacted by the encroachment.

Mr. Davis asked the Committee two questions: 1. Does HRM need a policy on encroachments which affect the use of the sidewalk? 2. Rather than a policy, should staff consider amendments to By-law E-200 Respecting Encroachments Upon, Under, or Over a Street?

Committee members expressed concern about the placement of construction signs on the sidewalk because it does not allow individuals with visual impairments to walk freely downtown. Mr. Davis explained that there are provincial requirements for construction signs and that they can pose challenges especially in urban areas.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Ms. Theresa Horwill, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee request the Transportation Standing Committee to review the amendments to By-Law S-800 and report back to the Committee on the status of the amendments. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Committee members expressed frustration around having to go through another committee to request information on issues that impact accessibility in HRM, rather than having HRM staff proactively approaching them for their input.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Ms. Theresa Horwill, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee request that the Transportation Standing Committee ask staff to perform a cross-jurisdictional review and examine best practices around the encroachment issue and report back to the Committee. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Mr. Bob Hayter, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee request to the Transportation Standing Committee that any future applications for permanent encroachments on sidewalks be reviewed by the AAC for input and that the Committee's comments be submitted as part of the staff report. MOTION PUT AND PASSED

4.2 Development of Strategic Five Year Plan

Notes on the AAC Strategic Five Year Plan Workshop held on March 18, 2013 were before the Committee.

Item deferred to next meeting.

4.3 Discussion on defining "Accessibility"

The Chair shared with the Committee that there is already a definition of Accessibility in the AAC Terms of Reference. When the Chair read the definition aloud Committee members did not agree on the definition and asked for this to be discussed at the next meeting.

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATION – None

6. REPORTS /DISCUSSION

6.1 Update on accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings

6.1.1 Staff Update

Mr. Darren Young shared with the Committee that the tender for the Highfield Park Transit Terminal is out and will include the same accessibility features as the Dartmouth Transit Terminal. The Lacewood Transit Terminal is in the process of being developed and will incorporate some of the accessibility features as well. Mr. Young also stated that a commitment to replace the elevator at City Hall has been made and it will be fully accessible. The elevator shaft will be re-located to accommodate its new dimensions.

The updates at Captain William Spry Recreation Centre have also been completed with one outstanding issue in the ladies change room which is being resolved.

6.1.2 Committee Member Update – None

6.1.3 Prioritization of facilities requiring accessibility upgrades

The list of Proposed Priority Sites (as of June 15, 2011) were before the Committee along with a full list of HRM facilities.

Mr. Young reviewed the status of each of the Priority Sites for the Committee in terms of door operators and suggested to the Committee that they will need to add some more priorities for door openers shortly. Mr. Young also asked the Committee what facility accessibility issue they would like to focus on in HRM owned/operated facilities after the after door operators and bathroom fixtures are completed.

The Committee discussed some issues around the Mumford Transit Terminal. Councillor Watts explained that while issues are widely acknowledged many are not solvable as a result of the space and location. She also mentioned that there are two upcoming public consultations with Metro Transit which would be great opportunities for Committee members to voice these types of concerns.

6.2 Committee Member Updates

6.2.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – *Cindy Bryant*

Ms. Bryant updated the Committee on tactile signage installed at the First Lake Trail in Sackville. She has invited Mr. Bob Taylor and Friends of First Lake Society to come to a committee meeting at their convenience to discuss tactile signage. Ms. Bryant asked that the Clerk's Office ensure that they are included in a future agenda.

6.2.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – *Tom Boyd*

Mr. Tom Boyd was not able to attend this meeting and forwarded his reports on recent Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group meetings to the Committee for their information.

6.3 Appointments of AAC representatives on HRM Boards and Committees

The Terms of Reference were before the Committee for The Active Transportation Advisory Committee, the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group, and the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee.

6.3.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee

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

MOVED by Mr. Mark MacKenzie, seconded by Ms. Theresa Horwill, that Ms. Cindy Bryant be nominated as representative to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

6.3.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group

The Chair asked if any Committee members would be interested in representing the Accessibility Committee on the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group. Pat Gates put her name forward.

MOVED by Ms. Theresa Horwill, seconded by Mr. Bob Hayter, that Ms. Patricia Gates be nominated as representative to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

6.3.3 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee

The Chair asked if any Committee members would be interested in representing the Accessibility Committee on the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee. Tom Boyd had requested that his name be put forward in an email to Ms. Theresa Horwill prior to the meeting.

MOVED by Ms. Theresa Horwill, seconded by Mr. Bob Hayter, that Mr. Tom Boyd be nominated as representative to the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

7. ADDED ITEMS

7.1 Update on the Roundabout

The Committee requested information on the roundabout. Councillor Watts shared with the Committee that staff would be updating the Active Transportation Advisory Committee on pedestrian and cycling issues to do with the roundabout so the Accessibility Committee should be able to receive an update shortly.

7.2 CNIB Larry Uteck Roundabout Walk

Ms. Theresa Horwill shared with the Committee that the CNIB has organized an event on Wednesday, April 24, 2013 at 9:30 a.m. for several HRM staff to go to the roundabout on Larry Uteck Boulevard. They are going to be blindfolded and demonstrate how individuals with visual impairments will negotiate the roundabout. Ms. Theresa Horwill invited Committee members to attend.

7.3 Bayers Lake Accessibility - update

Deferred to next meeting.

7.4 Regional Plan Review

The Chair shared with the Committee that they have an opportunity to have input in the Regional Review Plan and she suggested that the Committee apply the IRIS lens to the Plan. She will have the link to IRIS shared with Committee members via email so that they can apply it to the plan.

Councillor Watts requested that the Clerk's Office contact her to acquire a copy of the Plan so that it can be distributed electronically to members when its available.

The Chair suggested that the Committee consider allowing five minutes at the end of their meetings to be dedicated to public participation. The Committee agreed that they should add this to the list of amendments they would like to see go forward to the AAC Terms of Reference.

Ms. Bryant suggested that accessibility as addressed by the Committee should include mental illness in light of recent news. Other Committee members referred to the discussion had around this at the workshop and agreed that it should be discussed further.

Ms. Bryant attended the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Awards. She suggested that Keith Gelhorn who is involved with ADHD Advocacy be invited to present to the Committee.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE – May 13, 2013

The next meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is scheduled for Monday, May 13, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, main floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

9. ADJOURNMENT

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

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support