

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

May 13, 2013

PRESENT: Lisa Pottie, Chair
Theresa Horwill, Vice Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Steve Craig
Patricia Gates
Tom Boyd
Bob Hayter
Cynthia Bryant
Krista Daley
Mark MacKenzie

REGRETS: Yvon Clement

STAFF: Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, HRM Human Resources
Darren Young, Project Manager, HRM Planning & Infrastructure
Antonio Feijoo, Supervisor, Accessible Services, Metro Transit
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:12 p.m. in Halifax Hall on the Main Floor of City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – April 15, 2013

A correction was noted to the attendance portion of the minutes.

MOVED by Ms. Patricia Gates, seconded by Ms. Krista Daley, that the Minutes of April 15, 2013 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

- 7.1 Cogswell Shakeup Meeting
- 7.2 TIANS Accessible Nova Scotia Committee
- 7.3 Share the Road event

MOVED by Theresa Horwill, seconded by Bob Hayter, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Development of Strategic Five Year Plan

The Chair suggested that a sub-committee be struck to work on the Five Year Plan.

Tom Boyd, Councillor Watts, Theresa Horwill, Krista Daley and Laughlin Rutt offered to form the Subcommittee. Ms. Cindy Bryant also offered to take part in the Subcommittee meetings, schedule-permitting.

Councillor Watts suggested that the Subcommittee on the Strategic Five Year Plan meet before the Accessibility Committee's next meeting in June.

Ms. Daley confirmed that this Subcommittee would compile information and then come back to the Committee to seek direction and approval. The Chair told Committee members that all members would have input whether they were on the Subcommittee or not.

4.2 Discussion on defining "Accessibility"

The Accessibility Advisory Committee Terms of Reference were before the Committee.

This item was left for the Subcommittee to discuss during their first meeting.

4.3 Bayers Lake Accessibility

Ms. Pat Gates informed Committee members that Canadian Council of the Blind are partnering with a number of organizations on the issue of accessibility in Bayers Lake. Metro Transit has stopped providing services to individual stores which is posing a number of issues for individuals with accessibility difficulties. All of the organizations will be meeting together in June to go through a proposed solution. Meetings with property owners and work on a publicity campaign for the cause are also being discussed.

4.4 Regional Plan Review (RP+5)

The Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society's Disability and Inclusion Based Policy Analysis was before the Committee.

Councillor Watts explained to the Committee that the HRM Regional Plan was completed in 2006 and is now going through the mandated 5-year review process and the revised plan will be ready to release for consultation shortly. She encouraged Committee members to attend the public consultations and also committed to distributing an email with links to the drafts so that Committee members can have a chance to analyze the Plan from an accessibility standpoint. The Councillor suggested that Committee members bring their feedback to the next meeting so that it can be shared with staff before things are finalized.

The Chair suggested that Committee members examine the guiding questions on page 15 onwards to assist them in analyzing the plans.

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATION

5.1 Presentation – Refusal of Taxi Service – Ms. Linda Sheppard

Ms. Linda Sheppard was invited to share her story with the Committee. Ms. Sheppard explained that she had experienced poor treatment on a number of occasions trying to get a taxi home from the grocery store but an incident that happened last September forced her to take action.

Ms. Sheppard had the customer service representative at Sobeys call a taxi for her. When the taxi came the driver put her groceries in the back of the taxi. Ms. Sheppard got into the taxi but her guide dog was unable to fit because the passenger seat was pulled too far back. When she requested that the driver move the passenger seat up to allow her dog to fit, he refused, took her groceries out of the trunk and left her.

Ms. Sheppard filed a Human Rights Complaint against the taxi driver and it was accepted. The process involved a roundtable discussion between all parties which

included the taxi driver, the owner of the cab company, the taxi commission, a lawyer from HRM and the Human Rights Officer. The case is currently being written up.

The taxi driver was fined \$130 with no suspension of his license. Ms. Sheppard and Committee members would like to see the fine schedule examined along with possible remedial and educational components which could be used. It was noted that various options were available to the Commission in penalizing the drive but they chose a less severe penalty.

Mr. Antonio Feijoo, Supervisor, Accessible Services, Metro Transit, suggested that there should be an education campaign around the need for citizens in HRM to be more mindful of individuals with accessibility issues and their various needs. He explained that most of the seats on HRM buses are actually reserved for individuals with various accessibility issues but individuals are not aware. Committee members agreed that this would be a good thing for the Five Year Strategic Plan Subcommittee to examine.

Ms. Sheppard stated that two things need to happen as a result of her case. The first thing is that taxi drivers need to be educated about human rights and she has been informed that all parties that were a part of the Human Rights Complaint process will be working on this aspect. The second issue is that Ms. Sheppard believes stricter fines, penalties and suspensions need to be in place because the current system is not effective.

Committee members thanked Ms. Sheppard for coming and shared that they had witnessed and heard about incidents similar to hers, making this an important issue to address.

Mr. Boyd, who has sat on the Taxi and Limousine Liaison Group for the last two years, shared with the Committee that the drivers assessment exam used by the Commission for language levels and drivers' understanding of human rights, among other aspects of taxi driving, is in the process of being revised. It has not been revised for a number of years and as a result the answers are widely distributed to individuals taking the test.

Mr. Rutt requested that Ms. Sheppard share the written document that she will be provided coming out of the Human Rights Complaint process. The document will outline what each party is responsible for, allowing the Committee to follow up and ensure that each party is following through on their commitments. Mr. Rutt committed to working with Linda to getting the document and sharing it with the Committee.

Mr. Rutt stated that this is a major level of risk to the municipality and it warrants the attention of HRM corporately and through its elected members. He stated that these cases need immediate attention.

Councillor Craig reviewed the by-laws associated with the obligations of taxi drivers in the meeting and cross-referenced them with the Committee's mandate. After sharing this information with the Committee he moved the following Resolution:

MOVED by Councillor Steve Craig, seconded by Pat Gates, that the Human Rights Commission complaint resolution document from Linda Sheppard's case be provided to the Accessibility Advisory Committee when completed to be used in the formation of recommendations to the Transportation Standing Committee to be taken forward to Regional Council, which can work to tighten the criteria around individuals with accessibility issues and the barriers they face associated with taxis. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Committee thanked Ms. Sheppard for sharing her story.

5.1.1 Review of Taxi Industry educational material about passengers with disabilities

A document entitled "Important Information for Taxi Drivers in HRM About Passengers with Disabilities" was before the Committee.

This information was reviewed during the earlier presentation and discussion.

Councillor Craig left the meeting at 5:33 p.m.

6. REPORTS /DISCUSSION

6.1 Future Presentations

The Chair asked Committee members to bring any ideas that they have for possible presenters to the June meeting. She asked that presentations be no more than 20 minutes and that the groups be focused on the work that they do.

6.2 Next Town Hall Meeting

The Chair explained to the Committee that if they would like to have another Town Hall Meeting that planning will have to start soon. Ms. Bryant suggested that a subcommittee be struck to organize the event. Ms. Bryant and Ms. Gates offered to be part of the Subcommittee. The Chair suggested that the Sub-Committee reach out to the Disability Partnership and ensure that an interpreter is scheduled to sign at the event.

Mr. Rutt suggested that the meeting take place in Dartmouth this time to be more inclusive.

The Chair suggested that the Committee do some brainstorming at the next meeting to assist the Sub-Committee.

6.3 Update on accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings

6.3.1 Staff Update

Mr. Young shared with the Committee that the washroom and other interior improvements at the Mooseland Community Centre have been completed. The external work will be underway in the next few weeks with the improved weather.

The Highfield Terminal tender closes next week with a significant amount of interest.

Mr. Young has a meeting with Royal Doors on May 29th to discuss locations for door operators so he would like the Committee to provide some new locations for door operators (refer to 6.3).

Mr. Boyd asked where we stand with the revised Service Animal Policy. Mr. Feijoo informed the Committee that it is still with Legal Services and offered to check-in with them.

6.3.2 Committee Member Update

Ms. Horwill attended the session HRM hosted at the Larry Uteck Roundabout to demonstrate how the proposed roundabouts that may be going in around the Commons will work. Individuals negotiated the roundabout blindfolded. Ms. Horwill said that it went very well when individuals entered the roundabouts but faced numerous challenges when exiting. She also noted that HRM is considering taking the dog run for service animals away and utilizing that space for the roundabout.

MOVED by Ms. Theresa Horwill, seconded by Mr. Bob Hayter, that the Committee ask the Transportation Standing Committee to confirm that the service dog park be transitioned properly prior to the current park shutting down, ensuring that there is no gap in having an open service dog park. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

6.3.3 Prioritization of facilities requiring accessibility upgrades

Mr. Boyd asked that all of the items on the previous list be confirmed as complete. He also suggested that the Committee examine a number of new facilities: Sackville Public Library, George Dixon Community Centre, Halifax North Memorial Public Library, Gray Arena, La Verne Recreation Centre, St. Andrews Community Centre, Bowles Arena, Keshen Goodman Library, St. Mary's Boat Club.

Ms. Horwill asked whether or not Committee members would continue to go out and inspect facilities. The Chair said that it relies on Committee members having the time and skillset to conduct the inspection; it has been an additional function of the Committee that is not in our Terms of Reference. Mr. Bob Hayter and Mr. Mark MacKenzie offered to accompany Ms. Horwill and Mr. Boyd in their inspections so that they can learn how to do facility assessments.

6.4 Committee Member Updates

6.4.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – Cindy Bryant

Ms. Bryant informed members that there was no update to provide.

6.4.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – Pat Gates

Ms. Pat Gates shared that a new bicycle lane will be going in on Windsor St.

7. ADDED ITEMS

7.1 Cogswell Shakeup Meeting on Thursday night

The Cogswell Shakeup meeting is happening on Thursday night (May 16th, 2013) and a number of Committee members will be attending. Members who attend will provide a brief update at the next meeting.

7.2 TIANS Accessible Nova Scotia Committee

Ms. Theresa Horwill and Mr. Tom Boyd attended a meeting for the TIANS Accessible Nova Scotia Committee. Ms. Horwill expressed that the provincial committee is very concerned that no representatives from the Accessibility Committee are going to be officially appointed to it. She stated that they will be writing the Mayor to express their disappointment and request that a member be added. Committee members explained that appointing a member is not in the Terms of Reference and needs to be a directive of Council. Committee members are welcome to attend the provincial meetings, but not as representatives of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

7.3 Share the Road Event

Share the Road is an event at the School of Architecture, Dalhousie University on Wednesday evening (May 15th, 2013). Dalhousie is partnering with the Ecology Action Centre to discuss ways to share the road that are more inclusive. Councillor Watts offered to share the invite with Committee members via email.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE – June 17, 2013

The next meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is scheduled for Monday, June 17, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, main floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support