

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

June 17, 2013

PRESENT: Theresa Horwill, Vice Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Patricia Gates
Tom Boyd
Bob Hayter
Cynthia Bryant
Krista Daley
Mark MacKenzie
Yvon Clement

REGRETS: Lisa Pottie, Chair
Councillor Steve Craig

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

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Vice-Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

Ms. Horwill explained to Committee members that she would be chairing the meeting as the Chair, Lisa Pottie, could not attend.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – May 13, 2013

Ms. Gates noted that item 4.3 of the May 13th minutes should read “Ms. Pat Gates informed Committee members that CCB is partnering...”, instead of CNIB.

Ms. Gates also requested further clarification of certain details from the discussion with Ms. Linda Sheppard. The Legislative Assistant will reference the recording from the meeting.

MOVED by Mr. Bob Hayter, seconded by Mr. Mark MacKenzie, that the Minutes of May 13, 2013 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Addition:

6.3.3 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee (as a standing item on the agenda)

MOVED by Ms. Krista Daley, seconded by Ms. Patricia Gates, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Draft AAC Strategic Plan

The draft Strategic Plan – Accessibility Advisory Committee 2013 was before the Committee.

Ms. Horwill reported that the sub-committee met and had a very active meeting.

The sub-committee identified four main areas that needed focus: governance and management; communications, outreach and education; ongoing activities; and special projects. The components for each of these are laid out on the chart which was distributed to Committee members and which Ms. Krista Daley went through at the meeting.

Ms. Daley added to the Ongoing Activities page that an ongoing role of the Committee is to attend other community consultations such as the Cogswell Shakeup. Councillor Watts suggested that HRM consultations in general should be added to this section to allow for more attention to accessibility throughout these processes.

Ms. Daley emphasized that all Committee members should send in any additional items they believe should be added to the chart so that it can be finalized.

Ms. Bryant asked to be added to the sub-committee email list so that she could attend meetings when available.

Councillor Watts was concerned about the timeline around a Town Hall meeting being pulled together by September and ensuring input for all members. She also committed to work on the bylaw/policy review section and report back to the Committee in the fall.

Ms. Bryant said that she would be interested in building strategic relationships.

Councillor Watts informed the Committee that an individual from HRM Communications is now attending some meetings of the Accessible Transportation Committee and working on communications and connections for them on an ongoing basis. The Councillor thought it would be good for this Committee to have a similar relationship with a communications staffer and offered to make the request.

Mr. Rutt suggested that Committee members email Ms. Krista Daley with the aspects of the plan that they would like to be involved in that complement their interests and experience. Ms. Daley requested that Committee members add anything that they would like added to the plan which will shape the Committees work for the next three to five years.

4.2 Future Presentations

Ms. Horwill and Mr. Boyd spoke with Ms. Tanya Phillips, Manager of By-Law Services for HRM who offered to come and present to the Committee. Ms. Horwill shared that the Chair is in favour of inviting Ms. Phillips to present and the Committee agreed. It was requested that the Legislative Assistant make the arrangements.

Mr. Boyd was listening to a presentation given by Keith Gelhorn, an individual with ADHD who works as a life skills coach, and thought it would be good to have this gentleman come and speak to the Committee. Mr. Boyd noted that the Committee should have an increasing focus on mental health issues and this would be an informative presentation in that regard. The Committee agreed that this would be a good idea and requested that the Legislative Assistant make the appropriate arrangements.

Councillor Watts requested that the Committee allow an individual come and speak to them regarding accessible housing. She has some specific requests from an individual

representing a large housing unit along with some individuals who are concerned that the law which requires new buildings to have accessible units is not being enforced.

Councillor Watts also raised concerns around the how much time presentations can take up. She stated that other Committees only allow presenters to present for ten minutes with time for questions following and the presenters are informed of that in advance of the presentation.

Ms. Bryant shared with the Committee that her friend wishes to come and speak to the Committee about issues around walking trails being more accessible for individuals with visual impairments.

Ms. Gates stated that she would like individuals with specific disabilities addressing the Committee. Councillor Watts clarified that Ms. Gates is comfortable with a mix of presenters that include individuals who have disabilities and individuals representing people with disabilities.

Supt. Cliff Falkenham commented on the wide range of mental disabilities and how it will be difficult for the Committee to get a grasp on all of them.

Ms. Bryant suggested that Dr. Stan Kutcher would be a good presenter given how knowledgeable he is on mental health issues. Ms. Daley suggested that it would be good to have someone come in and speak to the Committee around the broad range of issues such as Dr. Kutcher.

Ms. Horwill asked Committee members to email her any remaining suggestions for presenters and said that she and the Chair will meet between now and the next meeting to discuss them.

4.3 Next Town Hall Meeting

Ms. Gates, who is helping to organize the Town Hall, is concerned about a number of the logistical details such as setting up interpreters, getting microphones and paying for advertising. Ms. Horwill explained that the Clerk's Office often handles many of these issues.

When discussing appropriate venue possibilities, Committee members agreed that they should plan on having about one hundred individuals attending the meeting as a result of last year's turnout.

Councillor Watts suggested that late September or early October would be a good time to have the Town Hall. Committee members agree with Mr. Rutt that they should try to host the event in Dartmouth. The Committee agreed to investigate having the meeting in the Dartmouth Sportsplex Multi-Purpose room. Mr. Rutt suggested that the sub-committee discuss the logistics with Jennifer Weagle. Ms. Gates said that she would pursue that avenue.

Councillor Watts suggested the Committee clarify the budget that's available from the Clerk's Office for this event.

4.4 Regional Plan 5 Year Review public consultation process – update

The Chair's email submission for the Regional Plan Five Year Review was circulated to the Committee at her request.

Tonight is the last public consultation and it will be taking place in a Town Hall format. Councillor Watts let Committee members know that they have until June 28th to review the plan and request changes.

Mr. Clement asked to have an electronic copy of the Chair's letter regarding the consultation process sent to him. Ms. Daley read the letter out loud.

4.5 Metro Transit Service Animal Policy – update

The Committee requested that Ms. Jennifer Weagle look into the status of the Service Animal Policy and the wording that the Committee recommended. The Committee asked for a status update at the next meeting.

Mr. Clement shared that his wife had some issues with a service animal being aggressive towards her own service animal on a plane. Mr. Clement is wondering whether or not Metro Transit employees are asking for service animal IDs which would show where the service animal comes from. Mr. Clement stated that he believes that any service animal, especially going onto public transit, should show their ID. In response, Mr. Rutt stated that most service animals do not come with IDs as a result of the myriad of service animals and their varied training which makes it difficult to require service animals to have an ID. Mr. Rutt stated that the care and control of the animal is paramount. If there are issues with care and control of the animal that could be a reason for a service provider to deny service.

Mr. Antonio Feijoo said that most service dogs in HRM are trained by very professional organizations like MIRA which are extremely expensive programs. He knew of one service dog that was extremely aggressive, an Australian Sheppherd, and as soon as the dog created an issue it was sent back to Ontario where it was trained.

Ms. Bryant asked where the wording that the Committee suggested is. Ms. Horwill said that it is still with HRM Legal Services for review. Mr. Glenn Bannon stated that he would follow up with legal to find out where the policy is.

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATION - None

6. REPORTS /DISCUSSION

6.1 Discussion – Accessibility and Housing

Councillor Watts stated that she has received specific requests around zoning, small option homes and individuals trying to find housing and accessible units. She requested that these issues be incorporated into some of the presentations in the fall and that the Committee discuss in what capacity they could be of assistance.

The question was raised as to whether or not it is required to provide certain units if you are constructing a building that is provincially funded as opposed to independently funded.

Ms. Gates suggested that while discussing accessible units the Committee may wish to discuss individuals on fixed incomes and issues around affordability of housing. Councillor Watts stated that there is an entire section in the Regional Plan on housing affordability but that perhaps this Committee should focus on issues around the requirement for accessible units to be built into new buildings not being followed up on.

Mr. Clement and Ms. Gates made the point that looking at accessible housing involves looking at accessible housing for individuals with disabilities who can afford them. Ms. Gates also made the point that moving is much more difficult for individuals with disabilities who need to have better knowledge of their area than others.

Ms. Bryant discussed a breakfast held by NSLEO that discussed these issues and suggested that it would be good if it could be distributed to Committee members. The Committee requested that the Legislative Assistant look into getting a copy of the minutes from that breakfast and distributing them to members.

Mr. MacKenzie stated that if something is not affordable it is not truly accessible and should therefore be considered in the updated definition.

6.2 Update on accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings

6.2.1 Staff Update

Mr. Young shared with the Committee that HRM has committed to covering the cost of the accessible elevator in City Hall along with the elevator shaft which will be done this summer.

A revised list has been drafted for door operators and Mr. Young visited the ten new sites with Royal Doors. Purchase Orders have been issued for all sites meaning that 24 door operators will be installed in the next month approximately.

At the St. Andrews site a major project is being initiated. Once the door operator is installed they will take a closer look at how to make it more accessible before proceeding with other alterations.

Ms. Horwill asked Mr. Young to look into the parking lot at Needham.

Mr. Young informed the committee that they are continuing to work away on a number of projects. He is currently looking at bathroom renovations and audible fire alarms, and also considering looking at water fountains both interior and exterior throughout HRM. He also shared with the Committee that he is going to be using a software feature called Auto-Turn. The software is currently used to map out the spaces that buses need to turn but will now also be used to calculate the space needed for wheelchairs to maneuver on ramps.

A request came in to Mr. Young's office from the Road Builder Association and they are looking at featuring the tactile strips at the bridge terminal.

Mr. Clement shared concerns with the Committee about making a bowling alley more accessible since Fairlanes Bowling Alley will be closing. Committee members and staff informed Mr. Clement that unfortunately the bowling alley he is referring to is a private business in a privately owned building that they would not have jurisdiction over.

6.2.2 Committee Member Update

The report on the accessibility inspection of the Lake Echo Community Center was before the Committee.

Mr. Boyd, Ms. Horwill and Mr. Hayter went to Lake Echo Community Centre on June 5th and found a number of accessibility deficiencies. The building has a number of renovations and additions that have caused some issues as a result. The building was mostly funded by the Lions Club when it was being built. There are two children with accessibility issues who will be attending the Centre this summer. The members who viewed the facility believe that the issues can be easily fixed with minor corrections.

They also visited the Keshen Goodman Library to look at the sidewalk which is eroding.

6.3 Committee Member Updates

6.3.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – *Cindy Bryant*

Ms. Bryant could not attend the last meeting. Councillor Watts stated that the discussion was mostly around the north/south cycling corridor. The staff recommendation is to have a striped cycling lane go in on some streets. They are also recommending that a local bike lane project be started to calm traffic allowing for cyclists to cycle safely where it is not possible to put a bike lane in. The Committee recommended that further study be done on the parking mitigation on Agricola which is a contentious issue between cyclists and business owners.

6.3.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – Pat Gates

Ms. Gates reported that the Code of Ethics has been completed but can be amended in the future if necessary. At the Forum, the taxi stand may be moved to an area inside the Forum parking lot to accommodate the bike lane going in. The AAC were asked to speak with the driver or owner of Bob's Taxi with regard to Linda Sheppard's presentation from the last Committee meeting. The Vice Chair stated that this has been put on hold until the report comes back from human rights. Mr. Rutt, at the request of Ms. Horwill, will be following up with Ms. Sheppard to see if the Committee can get a copy of the final report before scheduling anything.

Mr. Boyd stated that it is important for the Committee to understand the driver's side of the story.

6.3.3 Crosswalk Safety Committee – Tom Boyd

The first meeting of the Crosswalk Safety Committee took place on May 23rd to go over the Terms of Reference. At the upcoming meeting on Thursday they will discuss process around how to express their views to the Transportation Committee. Staff will be presenting to the Committee around crosswalk standards along with a presentation on statistics from Halifax Police around crosswalk incidents.

7. ADDED ITEMS - None

8. SUMMER MEETING DATES

- Monday July 15, 2013, 4:00 p.m., Halifax, City Hall, 1841 Argyle St. Halifax
- Monday August 19, 2013, 4:00 p.m., Halifax, City Hall, 1841 Argyle St. Halifax

Ms. Horwill asked the Committee whether or not they would be willing to work through the summer or if they would like to meet one month and not the other. Ms. Bryant and Ms. Daley stated that they would not be able to attend the July meeting. After surveying Committee members Ms. Horwill stated that the Committee would meet in July and take off August.

Ms. Bryant asked about the accessibility plans for the new library and she was promised a report on that which she will share with the Committee.

Mr. Clement asked if the Legislative Assistant could describe any obstacles or construction Committee members might face in getting to the meeting when she sends out the meeting agendas. Mr. Young advised that the restoration around City Hall should be complete around October.

Ms. Gates stated that Councillor Rankin has informed her that a sidewalk will be going in on the east side of Chain Lake Drive in Bayers Lake.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support