

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

July 15, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Steve Craig
Lisa Pottie, Chair
Theresa Horwill, Vice Chair
Patricia Gates
Tom Boyd
Bob Hayter
Mark MacKenzie
Yvon Clement

REGRETS: Cynthia Bryant
Krista Daley

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CALL TO ORDER.....	3
2.	APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – June 17, 2013	3
3.	APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS.....	3
4.	BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES	3
4.1	Draft AAC Strategic Plan – Draft #3.....	3
4.1.1	Strategic Plan - Communications Plan.....	4
4.2	Future Presentations- Update.....	4
4.3	Next Town Hall Meeting – Update	5
4.4	Metro Transit Service Animal Policy – Update.....	5
4.5	Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission Complaint re: Service Animal Refusal of taxi Service - Update	6
5.	CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATION.....	6
5.1	Presentation – By-Law Enforcement – <i>Ms. Tanya Phillips, Manager, By- Law Services</i>	6
6.	REPORTS /DISCUSSION.....	7
6.1	Update on accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings ...	7
6.1.1	Staff Update	7
6.1.2	Committee Member Update	8
6.2	Committee Member Updates	8
6.2.1	Active Transportation Advisory Committee – <i>Cindy Bryant</i>	8
6.2.2	Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – <i>Pat Gates</i>	8
6.2.3	Crosswalk Safety Committee – <i>Tom Boyd</i>	8
7.	ADDED ITEMS	8
7.1	Specific Site Discussions	9
8.	NEXT MEETING DATE	9
9.	ADJOURNMENT	9

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 – June 17, 2013

Councillor Craig noted an amendment to the June 17, 2013 minutes; that he was not in attendance at that meeting.

MOVED by Mr. Tom Boyd seconded by Ms. Theresa Horwill, that the minutes of June 17, 2013 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Watts shared that the extension of the regional plan has moved to July 19, 2013.

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

Additions:

- 4.1.1 Strategic Plan Communications Plan
- 7.1 Specific Site Discussions

MOVED by Mr. Bob Hayter, seconded by Councillor Jennifer Watts, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Draft AAC Strategic Plan – Draft #3

Accessibility Advisory Committee Strategic Plan – Draft #3 was before the Committee.

The Chair shared how pleased she was with the Draft Strategic Plan prepared by the sub-committee.

Mr. Boyd stated that the Strategic Plan Sub-Committee has been waiting to hear from Committee members who can volunteer to assist under the various categories based on their personal interests and expertise. He encouraged Committee members to email Krista to sign up for their personal responsibilities.

The Chair requested some information around what would be considered an 'operational issue' on page 4 under "Develop process for consultation on operational issue". The Chair has some concerns around this piece because of the response time that would be required for the Accessibility Committee to follow up around operational issues.

Councillor Craig suggested that the Committee insert a piece around accessibility accomplishments and gaps in the plan. The Chair noted that a number of things are needed in this vein but that the task of collecting and analyzing the required data is too significant a task for the Accessibility Committee to take on in their current capacity.

The Chair shared with the Committee that she has been asked whether or not the Accessibility Committee could be involved in the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities in HRM. She believes that the Committee would need assistance for both this task and the one requested by Councillor Craig.

Councillor Watts suggested that this Committee put a motion to the Transportation Standing Committee for a staff report on this analysis.

MOVED by Councillor Craig, seconded by Mr. Bob Hayter that the Accessibility Committee request that the Transportation Standing Committee conduct an inventory analysis of how well HRM is doing in terms of accessibility.

4.1.1 Strategic Plan - Communications Plan

Councillor Watts reported to the Committee that she spoke with Bruce Debaie, Manager, Corporate Communications, and he offered to come to a Committee meeting to discuss how HRM Communications can assist throughout the process. It will allow Committee members and he to understand what is possible. Councillor Watts suggested that the Committee invite him to attend and the Committee members agreed that he should be invited to present.

4.2 Future Presentations- Update

The Chair shared that Bob Taylor of the First Lake Trail Group replied and is interested in presenting to the Committee. Keith Gelhorn cannot attend meetings because of scheduling challenges so Mr. Boyd suggested that the Committee ask someone else to come speak to mental health issues. Supt. Falkenham suggested that the Mobile Crisis Unit with nurses and police officers working together come and speak to the Committee so that they can demonstrate what they are dealing with on a day to day basis.

Mr. Clement suggested that the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC) be invited to present about their organization. Ms. Gates suggested that the Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) present to the Committee with regard to accessibility.

The Chair specified that presenters should present in relation to the Committee's role as it relates to accessibility issues in HRM. Pat suggested that members with guide dogs might be useful to hear from.

Mr. Rutt asked for clarification around what we are looking for exactly from the presentations. The Chair suggested that it would be useful for the Committee to hear

from organizations about where they see improvements can be made in regard to policy and bigger picture issues. Councillor Watts said that she tries to educate herself on various specific disabilities but believes that presentations to the Committee should provide guidance and development around policy and strategic thinking. Councillor Watts encouraged Committee members to attend presentations from various groups to learn more about specific issues outside of Accessibility Committee meeting time.

The Chair asked that Ms. Gates find out whether or not someone from CCB could come and present to the Committee in November.

4.3 Next Town Hall Meeting – Update

2013 Town Hall Meeting Info Update was before the Committee.

The Meeting is planned to take place in the Nantucket Room at the Dartmouth Sportsplex from 6:30pm-8:30pm.

The Committee requested clarity around the format of the room for the Town Hall to ensure that it is accessible and not auditorium style.

The Chair stated that the Committee would have to agree whether they would like to have the same format as last year or do something different. The Committee expressed the need to book individuals for the event. Councillor Watts and Councillor Crag stated that they can Chair the meeting. The Chair requested that invitations go out to presenters as soon as possible. Mr. Rutt requested that in addition to the presenters from last year that someone from HRM Trails be asked to attend and present. Councillor Watts asked that someone from Planning attend.

Mr. Boyd suggested that a focus of the meeting be on improvements that have taken place since last year's meeting.

The Chair suggested that the Committee think about whether or not aspects of the Strategic Plan should be focussed on in the meeting.

Councillor Watts asked that invitations go out to all Councillors and the Mayor in the form of an Outlook appointment as soon as possible.

Ms. Horwill offered to assess the proposed site for the Town Hall Meeting. The Chair offered to investigate interpreter services. Councillor Craig suggested that Ms. Horwill also investigate the Common Room to find out whether one would work better than another.

4.4 Metro Transit Service Animal Policy – Update

Mr. Bannon reported to the Committee that this issue has been referred to the Human Rights Commission because it is tied to a human rights case that is being dealt with at the moment.

4.5 Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission Complaint re: Service Animal Refusal of taxi Service - Update

Mr. Rutt reported to the Committee that he has been in contact with Ms. Linda Sheppard and that she has received the signed report from the Human Rights Commission. The Chair stated that she would be in touch with Ms. Sheppard to request a copy of the report to distribute to Committee members.

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATION

5.1 Presentation – By-Law Enforcement – Ms. Tanya Phillips, Manager, By-Law Services

Ms. Phillips informed the Committee that she did not prepare a formal presentation because she wanted her time to be focussed on questions from Committee members. She stated that the By-Laws provide her group with a framework for what they can and cannot do or enforce. She noted her understanding of sandwich boards and sidewalk cafes being issues raised at previous committee meetings and the Committee's previous meeting with Traffic & Right-of-Way Service in this issue. Her staff work with business owners to rectify these types of issues.

Councillor Watts emphasized the importance of residents calling 3-1-1 with any issues or complaints because it is the best way to get any issue into the system. She stated that if you have an issue with a sandwich board or sidewalk, you should call 3-1-1. Ms. Phillips said that after receiving a complaint from 3-1-1 her officers are either on site or talking to someone on site within a business day. If residents request a call back, staff will call them back and keep them updated.

Mr. Clement stated that he rarely gets a call back from HRM especially when it comes to him calling in on snow removal in the winter. Ms. Phillips stated that her department embraces relationships with property owners and individuals making complaints because they are an extremely important part of her team's investigations.

Councillor Watts requested that item 10.2.3 from the Council Meeting of June 11th be distributed to the Committee. The item which was passed by Council is follow up from the conversation that the Committee had with Mr. Chris Davis who presented on Encroachments and Sidewalk Cafes.

Ms. Phillips explained that a number of HRM by-laws were created 20-25 years ago. The focus was very different when many of them were drafted so when HRM revises a by-law there are many factors that need to be taken into consideration.

Mr. Boyd explained the difficulty that individuals with accessibility issues have been having with the construction going on and asked who would be responsible for this. Supt. Falkenham explained that you have to have a permit in order to close the sidewalk. Councillor Watts shared with the Committee that even when there is construction going on an accessible entrance has to be provided for individuals in wheelchairs. When a constituent did not have an accessible entrance, Councillor Watts contacted the Construction Oversight Officer who committed to looking into it.

Ms. Phillips told the Committee that the work that they are doing is working and pushing accessibility issues to the forefront of people's minds.

6. REPORTS /DISCUSSION

6.1 Update on accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings

6.1.1 Staff Update

Mr. Young reported that the door operators discussed last month are proceeding. The ramp at the Acadia School is going to be a challenging project because the power chair that it needs to accommodate requires twice the turning radius of a regular chair.

Accessibility features were added to two regional parks. An RFP for washroom facilities for the beaches has closed and will be going to Council in the next few weeks. The first two sites proposed are Chocolate Lake and Albert Lake which will be getting accessible washroom and change room facilities. Mr. Young also shared that they are looking into accessible water fountains.

Mr. Young explained that while his division was trying to put together a Standing Offer on audible alarm systems it is not possible because you cannot put them on a standing offer. They are looking at other options to achieve this.

Mr. Boyd let Mr. Young know that the earth at the Keshen Goodman Library has not been done and needs to be done while the weather is still nice. He also shared that the accessible button on the side of City Hall is not working.

Mr. Young shared that a new community centre will be opening in Bedford attached to the high school and there might be an opportunity for the Accessibility Committee to meet at the Bedford Hammonds Plains Community Centre and see it. The community centre will be completed within the next two or three weeks with school scheduled to open in September.

Mr. Clement expressed concerns about the guide dog park being taken out for the round-a-bout being constructed. Ms. Horwill said that Ms. Tanya Davis stated that they decided to leave the dog park in place because it is far enough away from where the construction will be taking place.

6.1.2 Committee Member Update

No Committee Member Update this month.

6.2 Committee Member Updates

6.2.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – *Cindy Bryant*

Ms. Bryant was not in attendance at the meeting.

6.2.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – *Pat Gates*

Ms. Gates explained that only one taxi driver came to the meeting and taxi drivers are deciding whether or not they are going to stay with the Liaison Group. There is an issue with a taxi stand on Windsor St. by the Forum because taxi drivers will no longer be able to park there with the bike lane going in. The taxi drivers are going to be distributing information around taxi fares and Code of Ethics, especially in locations where tourists are.

Issues were raised around taxis acting as limousines by taking their roof lights off or limousines acting as taxis.

There was also a discussion around loading and unloading of passengers around fire hydrants. The Group is going to approach the province to change the laws to allow cars to pick up and drop off in front of fire hydrants if they are occupied. Councillor Watts shared that the issue was also around drivers actually parking in front of fire hydrants to wait for fares.

6.2.3 Crosswalk Safety Committee – *Tom Boyd*

Mr. Boyd updated on the meeting of June 25th with two presenters, one of whom was Taso Koutroulakis and the other was a representative from the Police Department. The presenters discussed traffic incidents and Mr. Boyd was surprised at how few incidents there were and shared that there has been a reduction in fatalities. Mr. Boyd reported the highlights in Taso's presentation because he has reduced the time that individuals can take to cross the street. The Canadian standard is 1.3M/second and he has reduced it to 1M/second in most areas with the time being 0.8M/second in locations close to playgrounds, nursing homes, schools, seniors centres and hospitals. The Committee was very happy with this news.

The Chair requested that Mr. Boyd pass along a thank you to Taso from the Accessibility Committee for his efforts at the next meeting of the Crosswalk Safety Committee.

7. ADDED ITEMS

7.1 Specific Site Discussions

The Chair asked that the Committee consider how best to discuss specific site issues without taking up too much Committee meeting time. She suggested that the Committee could put a standing agenda item of the agenda to provide ten minutes for Committee members to discuss specific issues. Councillor Watts suggested that Committee members call 3-1-1 first and then if the response is not satisfactory that Committee members should share their issue with the Committee.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 16, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle St., Halifax. No meeting will be held in August.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support