

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

November 18, 2013

PRESENT: Theresa Horwill, Vice Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Steve Craig
Patricia Gates
Mark MacKenzie
Yvon Clement
Krista Daley
Bob Hayter

REGRETS: Lisa Pottie, Chair
Cynthia Bryant
Tom Boyd

STAFF: Glenn Bannon, Manager of Operations, Metro Transit
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Darren Young, Project Manager, HRM Planning & Infrastructure
Damion Stapledon, Community Recreation Planner
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 – October 21, 2013

Mr. Glenn Bannon corrected the spelling of his surname in the October 21, 2013 minutes.

MOVED by Councillor Watts seconded by Ms. Patricia Gates, that the Minutes of September 16, 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 Email re: Sambro Loop Transit Service from Mr. Barry Blakeney
- 7.2 Meeting re: Affordable Housing
- 7.3 Nova Scotia Disability Act
- 7.4 Service Animal Policy Update

Mr. Yvon Clement requested that an item regarding a taxi incident be added to next month's agenda. The Committee agreed.

MOVED by Mr. Yvon Clement, seconded by Ms. Krista Daley, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Watts thanked Ms. Theresa Horwill and Mr. Tom Boyd on behalf of the Committee for their contribution and groundbreaking work for the municipality.

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATION

The Committee agreed to re-organize the order of the presentations and to move the presentations up on the agenda to accommodate the presenters' schedules.

5.1 Presentation – Metro Community Housing Association – *Cathy Crouse, Executive Director*

The Metro Community Housing Association's Submission to Halifax Regional Municipality on the Five-Year Review of the Regional Plan was before the Committee.

The Metro Community Housing Association pamphlet was distributed to Committee members.

Ms. Cathy Crouse introduced herself and Metro Community Housing which is an organization that supports individuals in the community living with mental health difficulties. They are currently looking to re-develop some of their facilities which are very old and need to be re-vamped to fit the current provincial legislation and municipal guidelines around small group homes.

Ms. Crouse indicated that Metro Housing believes that a number of HRM's zoning by-laws are not just outdated but also in violation of human rights especially in Dartmouth. A number of neighbourhoods that this organization has and needs housing in allow for only a maximum of three individuals to live in a house, creating extreme limitations to the options the organization has for group homes.

Ms. Crouse explained to the Committee that revisions to some of these by-laws would be of great assistance to their organization so that they can increase their capacity and existing services within the framework of the neighbourhoods that they are already operating.

Councillor Watts noted that the level of detail Ms. Crouse provided the Committee was extremely helpful. She also said that as Council begins reviewing the by-laws in the urban core of Halifax and Dartmouth some of these issues will likely be addressed. Councillor Watts asked if it would be appropriate for the AAC make a request to the Grants Committee to provide comment on a portion of the document Ms. Crouse provided.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Mr. Bob Hayter that the letter from Ms. Cathy Crouse be forwarded to the Grants Committee via the Transportation Standing Committee with specific reference to Item 3 in the submission and that the Grants Committee review and provide comment back to the AAC.

Ms. Gates asked if re-zoning were possible, would the existing Metro Housing facility with 33 individuals be broken up into smaller groups. Ms. Crouse said they would split that facility into smaller groups if the province could support the cost of staff support for that.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Craig and Councillor Watts stated that they would write directly to the Grants Committee in this regard.

5.3 Presentation – Lacewood Transit Terminal – *Patricia Hughes, Metro Transit*

Ms. Hughes is currently supervising the design and construction of the new Lacewood Transit Terminal located along Lacewood Drive across from Radcliffe Drive.

Regional Council approved the beginning of construction, the first phase of which started on October 8th. They have completed a first concept design which has not been finalized or gone to tender yet so Metro Transit wanted to check in with the Committee and get their input in the initial stages of the project.

Ms. Hughes asked the Committee to review the design and discuss their thoughts on it, as well as anything they would like to see included. She showed the Committee the design and described it.

Ms. Hughes shared with the Committee that they would be using some of the accessibility features from the Bridge Terminal that have been working very well such as the tactile signage and the tactile strips and pads.

Ms. Hughes shared that a possibility of an accessibility feature would be to have doors on motion sensors instead of having to push a button. Committee members thought that would be a good addition.

Ms. Horwill requested that there be more hand dryers and hand towels than there are at the Dartmouth Terminal washrooms.

Mr. Rutt asked that Ms. Hughes discuss levelling the trail and tying the trail in with the bus station to make it more accessible for individuals because there is a significant gully at this time and Mr. Rutt did not find it to be accessible.

Mr. Rutt asked whether or not the single entrance for buses as illustrated in the design would be an issue for buses that turn wide. Ms. Hughes shared with the Committee that before the design goes to tender there will be a functional design done to ensure that all of the functional aspects of the design are adequate.

Mr. Clement asked whether or not a change machine could be installed to allow individuals to make change to get onto the bus.

Councillor Watts asked if there would be additional covering at the terminal than what is illustrated in the design to provide shade and shelter on the platform. Councillor Watts also asked that additional information be posted regarding where things are located because of the close vicinity to the Canada Games Centre and the Keshen Goodman Library.

Councillor Watts also asked about how pedestrians are going to be getting in, out and around the terminal and asked that it be designed to ensure that people are encouraged to walk and bike, with a possible dedicated and secure bike storage area.

Supt. Falkenham asked about where the crosswalk would be located and also requested that the crosswalk be built in before the terminal is completed because Lacewood Dr. is a very dangerous street for pedestrians.

Ms. Horwill thanked Ms. Hughes for coming to the Committee so early in the process.

Ms. Hughes asked that Committee members contact her following the meeting if they have any questions or comments. Her contact information is: hughesp@halifax.ca, 490-6287.

5.2 Presentation – Difference Between Partially Sighted and Blind Accessibility Issues – *Pat Gates, Chair, Canadian Council of the Blind, Advocacy & Awareness*

Ms. Gates explained to the Committee that she is legally blind and that when she looks at individuals she sees blurs without definition. She showed examples of three types of canes with different tips for various terrain and needs. She told Committee members that when offering assistance to an individual with visual impairment you should offer them your arm verbally.

Ms. Gates explained that transitioning from being fully-sighted to having deteriorating vision is very jarring and could happen to anyone. She encouraged all Committee members to get their eyes checked once a year to ensure that they do not get any surprise diagnoses.

Ms. Gates reiterated the need for the announcement system in Metro Transit buses to Mr. Bannon because at this time she relies on bus drivers to inform her when she has arrived at her stops. She also emphasized the importance of ensuring that partially sighted and blind individuals have a seat on the bus.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES/DEFERRED BUSINESS

4.1 Portable Ramps

At the last meeting, the Committee began considering if there would be any way for the Committee to promote businesses in HRM to use these ramps and increase the accessibility level of the Municipality.

Mr. Rutt stated that portable ramps work well for some individuals and not well for others. He shared that he has owned portable ramps which he would bring with him on vacation and that they should not be discounted.

The Mayor joined the meeting at 5:08pm.

Mr. Damion Stapledon said that if HRM is promoting the ramps that HRM should also promote safety around them. He also shared with the Committee that he and a partner have submitted a request to HRM to consult with the City of Ottawa around their recreational accessibility policies and plans.

Mr. Mark MacKenzie stated that although portable ramps may not be perfect he uses them frequently and they can make a big difference to a large number of individuals. There was a discussion among Committee members around how to move forward with possible initiatives like this one without staff support to the Committee. Mr. MacKenzie also suggested that if there are a number of volunteers perhaps staff support is not needed. Councillor Watts suggested that the Committee gain clarification on whether or not they are working on behalf of HRM when they are in the community. She also suggested that the individual in charge of business relations at HRM could send out information around portable ramps to all of the businesses on behalf of the Committee and also perhaps offer to design a decal that each business with a ramp can put outside to be obviously identified.

The Committee agreed that they require clarification around the function of the AAC and also the processes that the Committee needs to go through to move items forward.

Mr. Rutt committed bring some more information on various portable ramps to the AAC meeting in December.

6. REPORTS /DISCUSSION

6.1 Draft AAC Strategic Plan – Draft #3/ Terms of Reference review

The Strategic Plan Draft #3 and the AAC Terms of Reference were before the Committee.

Ms. Krista Daley stated that two of the main items the definition and the governance sections have not been discussed and suggested that she and Ms. Gates meet on these topics shortly. She also requested that Committee members email her any thoughts or information that they would like to share.

Councillor Craig suggested that the Committee look at the Ontario Human Rights Act as a good model for terms of reference. He said that the term 'voting members' needs to be clarified to state whether or not Councillors are 'voting members'. He also stated that while the AAC has six HRM staff members present at the Committee meeting, it does not have staff to provide follow up and ensure that AAC items for follow up are directed to the appropriate place. The Terms of Reference also do not provide information around the role of staff on the Committee. He stated that the Terms of Reference needs to be finalized and when that happens it will act as a catalyst for everything else.

Ms. Horwill shared with the Committee that Ms. Weagle informed her that the AAC cannot appoint a member to the Nova Scotia Tourism Committee until the request goes through the Transportation Committee and Council. Committee members agreed that the Terms of Reference need to be changed to clarify the authority the AAC has.

The Committee requested that the Terms of Reference from the Nova Scotia Tourism Committee be distributed before the next meeting so that Committee members can

examine the minutes and decide whether or not they would like to be nominated. At the December meeting the Committee will nominate a Committee member to sit on the Nova Scotia Tourism Committee and will send their nomination recommendation to the Transportation Committee who will then send it along to Council.

Councillor Watts requested that if Mr. Stapledon goes to Ottawa to discuss their accessibility policies that he also get information around their terms of reference and their accessibility committee's relationship with Council and other committees.

6.2 Update on accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings

6.2.1 Staff Update

Mr. Young shared with the Committee that the budget has mostly been spent making City Hall more accessible. There have been a few door operators installed in HRM facilities.

6.2.2 Committee Member Update

No update.

6.3 Committee Member Updates

6.3.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – *Councillor Watts*

The Committee has not met, Councillor Watts will provide an update in December.

6.3.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – *Pat Gates*

Ms. Gates shared that the discussion was mainly centred around the number of accessible cabs and whether or not they are being used appropriately. In October over 500 accessible calls were taken by Casino Taxi.

Ms. Gates stated that there has been another incident of a cab driver refusing to take a guide dog. Councillor Watts asked if there is a mechanism to deal with this sort of issue, Ms. Gates said that there is a mechanism but the issue is that individuals do not file official complaints. Official complaints can be filed through 3-1-1.

6.3.3 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee

At the last meeting Mr. MacKenzie expressed interest in attending these meetings, however, the meeting time changed to 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., which he cannot attend.

7. ADDED ITEMS

7.1 Email re: Sambro Loop Transit Service from Mr. Barry Blakeney

An email from Mr. Barry Blakeney dated November 18, 2013 was before the Committee.

Mr. Bannon said that he would take the email and respond to Mr. Blakeney who was in attendance as an observer at the meeting.

7.2 Meeting on Affordable Housing

There is a meeting taking place on Affordable Housing on Tuesday November 19th that the Chair cannot attend because she is out of town and she requested that a Committee member go on her behalf. Mr. Yvon Clement will be attending the meeting on behalf of the Committee.

7.3 Nova Scotia Disability Act

Ms. Gates advised that there is discussion underway to establish a Nova Scotia Disability Act modelled after the Ontario Disability Act. There is a meeting at Bloomfield School on Thursday, November 21, 2013 at 6:00 p.m. at which Committee members are welcome.

7.4 Service Animal Policy Update

Mr. Bannon shared that the Service Animal Policy has been in effect for months now and has been very successful.

One issue has come up that Mr. Bannon wanted to share with Committee members relating to an individual who has a service animal that uses an electronic leash. The policy clearly states that a service animal has to be in close control and also perceived to be under control. The electronic leash which is invisible does not allow for the perception of this particular animal to be under control. The animal in question is large and intimidating so Metro Transit is working with the individual to ensure that the general public is safe while taking their accessibility needs into consideration.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE

The Committee will meet Monday, December 16, 2013, 4:00 p.m., Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle St., Halifax.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support