

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

December 16, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Jennifer Watts  
Councillor Steve Craig  
Patricia Gates  
Mark MacKenzie  
Krista Daley  
Lisa Pottie, Chair

REGRETS: Cynthia Bryant  
Yvon Clement  
Bob Hayter

STAFF: Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police  
Darren Young, Project Manager, HRM Planning & Infrastructure  
Damion Stapledon, Community Recreation Planner  
Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant  
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support  
Anne Sherwood, Design Engineer, TPW  
Jim Donovan, Manager, Municipal Compliance  
Joshua Bates, Policy Advisor, Office of the Mayor

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant, 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. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

The Legislative Assistant called for nominations for Chair.

**MOVED by Ms. Jennifer Watts, seconded by Ms. Pat Gates, that Lisa Pottie be elected as Chair of the Advisory Committee for Accessibility in HRM for 2014. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

The Legislative Assistant called three times for any further nominations; there being none, she declared Ms. Lisa Pottie as Chair of the Advisory Committee for Accessibility in HRM.

Ms. Lisa Pottie assumed the Chair and called for nominations for Vice Chair of the Advisory Committee for Accessibility in HRM for 2014.

**MOVED by Ms. Pat Gates, seconded by Ms. Jennifer Watts, that Krista Daley be elected as Vice Chair of the Advisory Committee for Accessibility in HRM for 2014. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

The Chair called three times for any further nominations; there being none, she declared Ms. Krista Daley as Vice Chair of the Advisory Committee for Accessibility in HRM for 2014.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – November 18, 2013**

Ms. Gates corrected that under s. 6.2.3 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group update, the number of accessible taxi calls should be 500, not 400.

**MOVED by Councillor Jennifer Watts seconded by Ms. Krista Daley, that the minutes of November 18, 2013 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**4. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

**Addition:**

- 8.1 North Park Street Roundabouts Project Update

**Deferred items:**

Items 5.1 and 5.3 are deferred to the next meeting because of those individuals not in attendance.

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

**5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES/DEFERRED BUSINESS**

**5.1 Portable Ramps**

An information sheet on portable ramps was before the Committee.

This item was deferred to the following meeting.

**5.2 Draft AAC Strategic Plan – Draft #3/Terms of Reference for Review**

Draft #3 of the Strategic Plan was before the Committee.

Ms. Krista Daley walked the Committee through the proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference as distributed to the Committee.

It was proposed that the language describing voting members be revised.

With regards to the definition of disability there were two options presented with the recommendation being to include a definition of disability as a footnote as found in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. It was also proposed that the definition of “accessibility” from the Americans With Disability Act be used by the Committee.

Ms. Daley shared the recommendation for the Committee to report directly to Regional Council instead of through the Transportation Standing Committee. Committee members and staff raised a few technical issues with this.

Mr. Joshua Bates, Policy Advisory, Office of the Mayor, shared with the Committee that the current reporting system can be investigated as part of the overall governance review which is currently underway. Councillor Watts suggested that the Committee send all of the options to the Executive Standing Committee for the Governance Review so that they can see the options that the Accessibility Committee has been investigating.

Clarification around the role of staff at the meetings was proposed since it is not currently in the Terms of Reference. Clarification around the role of the Committee in assisting HRM staff was also recommended.

Ms. Daley put forward the recommendation that the concept of community consultation be added to the Committee's list of responsibilities, using the example of the annual town hall meeting.

Mr. Stapledon shared with the Committee that the Terms of Reference for the Ottawa Accessibility Committee is set out by the province. Mr. Stapledon also suggested that the Committee clarify the role of and relationship between Council and the Committee. Ms. Daley clarified that while Council is required to send certain things to the Committee for comment, there are items not included where Committee input could be useful.

Councillor Craig shared with the Committee that Accessibility is not an articulated key priority of Council and suggested that when some of the recommendations from the Committee are taken forward that needs to be kept in mind.

Mr. Joshua Bates suggested that any letter going forward from the Committee with regards to reporting changes should copy Chris Bryant who is the project manager of the governance review. Mr. Bates suggested that the Committee send a letter to him by February so that it can be included in his report around the review.

Councillor Watts suggested that the Committee request clarification around whether or not it could take on an information sharing role with the community in HRM without going through a specific Committee. She also suggested that a letter be drafted in January to Mr. Bryant outlining a number of the things proposed in the Terms of Reference recommendations.

Ms. Jennifer Weagle offered to put the Committee's conversation into the form of a draft letter to be distributed and considered at the January meeting.

### **5.3 Taxi Incident – *Yvon Clement***

This item was deferred to the following meeting.

## **6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATION**

### **6.1 Presentation – Permitting of New Buildings (commercial & residential) – *Jim Donovan, Manager, Municipal Compliance***

Mr. Donovan described Municipal Compliance as the regulatory division of HRM. They regulate By-Laws, License Standards and Building Standards which include Permits & Inspections. They regulate the construction of buildings including new buildings and renovations out of the Building Code Act. He stated that they would not have a Building Code Act if it was not for lobbying from accessibility committees in the 1980s.

There are specific Nova Scotia regulations for section 3.8, the Barrier-Free provision, that are used in the province instead of the national standards. Barrier-Free regulations only apply to certain buildings such as institutional buildings and commercial buildings

and they exclude residential buildings along with farming and industrial facilities. There is no provision for homes with regards to accessibility.

There is a code change process that allows citizens to submit suggestions for changes by filling out a Code Change Form. Examples of changes that are being made in other jurisdictions are door handles being changed to lever-type openers, thermostats being lowered while receptacles are being raised.

**MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Ms. Krista Daley, that the AAC request the Transportation Standing Committee request a staff report to inform the process for requesting changes for the provincial building code specific to accessibility in homes. The report should include other municipal jurisdictions that have made changes to regulations for homes such as those that require lever type handles on doors and faucets, height of light switches and mechanisms for improving access to barrier-free units in larger residential buildings. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

The Committee discussed sharing the staff report with the province as it would inform the province that the Committee is seeking revisions to the provincial legislation. Mr. Donovan pointed out that you cannot make a building rule that is less stringent than the provinces legislation. The province prefers to have the building standards provincially applicable but the Committee discussed that the recommendations could be implemented.

#### **7.4.1 Damion Stapledon – Ottawa Accessibility Trip Update**

Mr. Stapledon shared two YouTube videos with the Committee that outline the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IASR). The link to part one of the video can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOicdh2C8A0>.

Mr. Stapledon informed the Committee that in Nova Scotia there is no one to oversee that services are provided through a disability lens. In Ottawa the Terms of Reference for the Accessibility Committee outline that they provide input on programs, policies and services provided to persons with disabilities and seniors. He noted that this is a smaller focus than the Committee as it does not include housing.

Mr. Stapledon stated that the individuals he met with in Ottawa shared that they had operationalized a number of the things that they are mandated to do long before provincial legislation existed.

One of the biggest differences between Ottawa and HRM is densification. They have an Accessibility Office, a number of full time staff and part-time staff working on accessibility. Missing pieces in HRM is having designated individual on staff in this regard. The City of Ottawa also has an overall accessibility policy which provides an overarching lens for all departments. Every staff person for the City of Ottawa has to

take IASR training so that everyone has a level of understanding. Mr. Stapeldon stated that their approach is more about dignity than specific issues such as crosswalks or lights or ramps.

Councillor Watts requested that Mr. Stapledon keep the AAC advised of how he plans to implement the things that he learned in Ottawa on the go-forward. He agreed to follow up with the Committee.

## **8. ADDED ITEMS**

### **8.1 North Park Street Roundabouts Project Update**

Information on the North Park Street Roundabouts Project was before the Committee.

Ms. Anne Sherwood, Design Engineer for Transportation and Public Works, came to give the Committee an update on the North Park Street Roundabouts Project which has reached 50% at the design stage. She went through the information sheet that had been provided to the Committee.

One piece of information that was discussed in length was that the Service Dog Exercise Area at Rainnie Drive and Cogswell Street will need to be modified or relocated in 2015. The Accessibility Advisory Committee discussed this possibility previously. Ms. Sherwood is meeting with CNIB and CCB in January to discuss the dog park. The Committee requested that following those meetings, Ms. Gates inform the Committee whether CNIB would like to have the park in the same location with a smaller space or if their desire is to have it relocated.

The Chair suggested that Committee members take note of the Public Engagement Session taking place on January 29, 2014 at the Halifax Forum from 7-9pm. The Chair also said that she would spread the word to other organizations, which might have users of the dog park.

## **7. REPORTS /DISCUSSION**

### **7.1 United Way Partnership on Affordable Housing**

An email from the Legislative Assistant to the Accessibility Committee regarding the Mayor's Roundtable on Housing Letter was before the Committee.

**MOVED by Krista Daley, seconded by Mr. Mark MacKenzie, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee, with a particular interest around housing for persons with disabilities, supports Regional Council's endorsement of HRM's participation in the United Way's partnership on housing affordability so as to explore ways in which HRM can, within the municipal mandate, promote initiatives that could support affordable housing. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

## **7.2 Healthy Communities & Accessibility**

An email from Joshua Bates to the Chair regarding Healthy Communities and Accessibility was before the Committee.

Mr. Bates discussed with the Committee the Mayor's Healthy Community initiative and the focus that has been put on accessibility which is now one of the three areas that the Mayor and HRM would like to move forward with immediately.

Drawing from previous discussions by the Committee, Mr. Bates suggested as a part of the initiative a review of options for portable ramps for existing commercial businesses in HRM and discussions on opportunities for HRM to promote their use including potential linkages with Business Improvement Districts.

Mr. MacKenzie stated that he thought this was a great idea, and with the Committee's support Mr. Bates shared that he will be taking the idea forward to senior staff.

Mr. Bates also asked what the Committee's thoughts were on working with staff to conduct an assessment of the accessibility gaps within each department to create an overarching accessibility framework for HRM.

The Committee was supportive but Ms. Daley and the Chair cautioned Mr. Bates to not underestimate the length of time that a gaps analysis can take.

Mr. Bates stated that these two proposals will be brought forward to senior staff now that he has received the Committee's feedback and support.

Mr. Bates shared that he had come across a company called Essential Accessibility that does accessibility work on websites and has recently contracted with the City of Markham, Ontario. The company provides the software that makes the city's website much more accessible including capacity for motion sensors and text-to-read.

Ms. Daley said that this sort of website update is included in the Committee's Strategic Plan and the Chair stated that she is familiar with this type of software and that the Committee would be very supportive of this being investigated.

## **7.3 Update – Accessibility assessment of HRM owned/operated buildings**

Deferred to next meeting.

### **7.3.1 Staff Update**

Deferred to next meeting.



### **7.3.2 Committee Member Update**

Deferred to next meeting.

### **7.4 Committee Member Updates**

Deferred to next meeting.

#### **7.4.2 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – *Councillor Watts***

Deferred to next meeting.

#### **7.4.3 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – *Pat Gates***

Deferred to next meeting.

#### **7.4.4 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee – Appointment of an Accessibility Advisory Committee representative**

The Terms of Reference for the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee were before the Committee.

Mr. MacKenzie indicated that since the CSAC is an ad-hoc committee, he can continue to attend as the AAC representative. Ms. Daley offered to attend on Mark's behalf if he is unavailable.

## **9. NEXT MEETING DATE**

### **9.1 Approval of the 2014 Meeting Schedule**

The 2014 Meeting Schedule for the Accessibility Advisory Committee was before the Committee.

The Committee agreed with the schedule as presented, with the exception of the August meeting which will be deleted.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

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

Jenny Benson  
Legislative Support