

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

March 17, 2014

PRESENT: Lisa Pottie, Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts
Councillor Steve Craig
Patricia Gates
Mark MacKenzie
Bob Hayter
Yvon Clement
Troy Nauffts

REGRETS: Krista Daley, Vice Chair

STAFF: Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, HRM Human Resources
Darren Young, Project Manager, HRM Planning & Infrastructure
Ahmed Kidwai, Manager, Accessible Transit
Glen Bannon, Manager, Transit Operations
Taso Koutroulakis, Manager, Traffic & Right of Way Services
Scott Sheffield, Government Relations & External Affairs
Jim Donovan, Municipal Compliance
Chris Davis, Traffic & Right of Way Services
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support

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1. CALL TO ORDER

Councillor Craig called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – February 17, 2014

The following amendment was noted to the February minutes:

- Under Section 4.3 Accessible Taxis ‘Nation Standards Certification’ amended to ‘National Standards Certification’.

MOVED by Mr. Bob Hayter seconded by Mr. Yvon Clement, that the minutes of February 17, 2014 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

- 4.3 Access A Bus Snow Clearing
- 4.4 Call Centre Presentation
- 4.5 Website Accessibility Improvements
- 7.1 Service Animal Park
- 7.2 Accessible Parking
- 7.3 George Dickson Centre

MOVED by Mr. Yvon Clement, seconded by Mr. Troy Nauffts, that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

5.1 Presentation – Dementia Friendly City Concept – *Janice Chalmers*

The document ‘Dementia Friendly City Initiative Halifax’ was circulated to the Committee.

Ms. Chalmers thanked the Committee for allowing her to present to the Committee. She is a mental health nurse originally from Scotland who has been working all over the world with individuals who have dementia.

Ms. Chalmers provided the Committee with some background information. She shared that dementia-friendly cities are not a new concept, there are dementia-friendly cities all over the world but Canada has none.

There are over one hundred diseases that cause dementia that all present themselves differently. It can impact memory, communication and language, reasoning and judgment as well as visual perception. It can also effects individuals’ abilities to start a task.

Ms. Chalmers shared that research has concluded that society and the environment are determining factors in how well you can continue to function after you have been diagnosed with dementia. Individuals with dementia do much better if they can continue to be socially engaged and active in their communities, continuing similarly to the way that they did before developing dementia.

When individuals are diagnosed with dementia they are often treated differently and meaningful activity is restricted. Individuals who experience this decline much faster than individuals who continue on as their lives were before.

The Chair arrived at 4:10 p.m.

The number of individuals living with dementia is increasing drastically along with the cost of supporting them.

The dementia-friendly city concept allows the greatest percentage of individuals with dementia to live well. There are two distinct focuses: social environment and the physical environment, especially with regards to transportation.

Councillor Watts arrived at 4:18 p.m.

Some steps that can be taken to create a more dementia-friendly city concept are:

- considering the needs of individuals with dementia when decisions are being made;
- providing a listing of services and supports specifically for individuals with dementia;
- making mainstream programs more accessible for individuals with dementia;
- providing educational programs for all public-contact staff.

Supt. Falkenham shared with the presenter that he thinks the 'Dementia Awareness for Police' that was shared with the Committee prior to the meeting via email is a great resource. He shared the document with the Halifax Regional Police Training Unit.

Committee members learned that HRM is already signed on to the age-friendly initiative. Many of the factors in the age-friendly initiative are also applicable to the dementia-friendly city initiative.

Ms. Chalmers stated that she would send the 'Dementia Friendly City Initiative Halifax' document to the Legislative Assistant electronically so that it can be distributed to all Committee members in a digital format.

Ms. Gates asked whether or not dementia is categorized as a disability. Ms. Chalmers stated that she is not sure if it is specifically labeled as a disability here but a number of countries do recognize it as a disability. Councillor Craig shared with the Committee that it is recognized at the federal level.

Councillor Watts asked that the Legislative Assistant find out who from HRM is working on the age-friendly initiative and share that information with the Committee.

Mr. Troy Nauffts asked if Ms. Chalmers could give one example of how HRM could work to be a more dementia-friendly city. Ms. Chalmers said that one example would be making signage more simple. Mr. Nauffts stated that for all disabilities educating the support network is very important, including police officers.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES/DEFERRED BUSINESS

4.1 Information for Taxi Drivers in HRM – Passengers with Disabilities

The Chair stated that she will update the document and circulate it by email.

4.2 Automated Announcements for Metro Transit

The Committee requested an update on the Automated Announcement system from Mr. Glen Bannon. Mr. Bannon stated that equipment must be installed in the buses in preparation for the installation of the automated system. He shared that HRM is hoping to have this installation completed by 2015/2016 but also noted that HRM recognizes this as extremely important and he is hoping that the timeline will be fast-tracked.

The new systems will allow Metro Transit to track the location of buses and will also push out the location to the public via mobile devices so that passengers will get the location of buses in real-time. The system will involve the installation of new equipment, new software, a new interface for drivers, and new back end system for Metro Transit.

Trapeze, the company that is being used, is a world-renowned company and the particular system that HRM is installing is being used in a number of major cities at this time.

Councillor Watts shared with the Committee that Council has already committed millions of dollars in funding to these projects and she requested that the Legislative Assistant share the minutes from the Council meetings regarding these decisions with anyone interested from the Committee. Mr. Troy Nauffts requested that he receive a copy.

Mr. Rutt asked if a visual and audio component will be in the terminals also. Mr. Bannon said that Metro Transit is planning to but they are not sure what form it will take at this point.

4.3 Access A Bus Snow Clearing

Mr. Taso Koutroulakis reported that he sent an email that was forwarded on to the Committee members concerned.

4.4 Call Centre Presentation

The Committee requested that the Legislative Assistant follow up on this request for a presentation.

4.5 Website Accessibility Improvements

The Committee requested that the Legislative Assistant follow up on this request for a presentation.

5. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATION

5.2 Petitions – None

5.3 Correspondence - None

6. REPORTS/DISCUSSION

6.1 Sidewalk Café By-Law Consultation – *Scott Sheffield, Government Relations & External Affairs & Jim Donovan, Municipal Compliance*

Mr. Sheffield shared with the Committee that he is involved in a project that is considering making the Sidewalk Café into a By-Law as opposed to policy. The By-Law would change a number of aspects of sidewalk cafes but one section is particularly geared towards accessibility issues.

Mr. Sheffield is hoping that the Committee will endorse HRM moving to the CSA Standards Accessible Design for the Built Environment which have been endorsed at the federal level. Mr. Young shared that HRM adheres to these standards with all new building projects.

Mr. Donovan shared that the CSA Standards are nationally recognized even though there are no references to it in the by-laws. Not only do CSA Standards apply to private areas but it also deals with public areas and their amenities such as parks and recreation facilities.

The CSA Standards include very clear criteria around protrusion hazards. Mr. Young shared with Committee members that the criteria is similar to sections of the CNIB document 'Clearing the Path' so that the Committee members with visual impairments could have a reference point.

Mr. MacKenzie asked whether the By-Law would apply to new licenses only or if it will apply to existing things also. Mr. Donovan shared that it will be applied to all new licenses and the licenses will be renewed on an annual basis.

Mr. Sheffield shared with the Committee that the CAO and Regional Council will have to approve this before it can be applied. He also said that as a result of the timing, the by-law would not be applied to Café Season this year but if approved it would be applied next year.

Councillor Watts asked about whether or not the business community would be involved in a consultation for the by-law. Mr. Sheffield shared that there is a plan for consultation with business-improvement districts and business owners themselves. HRM is currently discussing an implementation plan for businesses to comply with all aspects of the standards.

Councillor Watts shared with the Committee and presenters that this is going to be a contentious issue and that Committee members should be able to speak articulately about what their issues have been and why these changes are so important.

Mr. Chris Davis with Right of way Services stated that this by-law is long overdue and it would allow HRM to work with the businesses on compliance instead of only having the option to revoke licenses.

Mr. Rutt and Councillor Craig spoke in favour of the by-law and adopting national standards.

Mr. Young requested that this policy come back through the Committee.

MOVED by Mr. Bob Hayter, seconded by Mr. Troy Nauffts, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee endorses the direction of the work so far and requests that the By-Law come back to the Committee once it has been finalized. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

6.2 Access A Bus Service Concerns – Pat Gates

An Email from Ms. Pat Gates regarding Access A Bus Incidents was before the Committee.

Ms. Gates stated that experiencing three issues within a week and a half is very troubling for her and all persons with disabilities. She stated that some of the issues around timing with Access A Bus are very concerning because for some individuals it is the only way to get out into the community. Ms. Gates shared that she has been forgotten by Access A Bus three times.

For many individuals with disabilities this is their main mode of transportation for all of their commitments and appointments. Ms. Gates stated to the Committee that some individuals who are experiencing issues with Access A Bus cannot advocate for themselves.

Ms. Gates also shared that she called 3-1-1 to file a number of complaints regarding Access A Bus service and has not received a call back.

Mr. Bannon stated that Ms. Gates' concerns are taken very seriously by Metro Transit and that they regret the experiences that Ms. Gates has had. He also shared that Accessible Transit is dealing with a number of issues surrounding their budget and also the fact that there are many aspects of the service that are out of Metro Transit's control. Mr. Bannon shared that the fleet and staff are currently expanding.

Mr. Kidwai shared with Committee members that Accessible Transit is very stretched at this time. There have been a large number of last minute cancellations over the past few months. He discussed the challenges that Accessible Transit is facing and a number of ways they are finding to better serve their clients and make themselves more efficient.

Mr. Bannon emphasized that the challenge Metro Transit is facing with Accessible Transit are huge because the need for accessible transit is growing at a rate that cannot be absorbed.

A number of Committee members asked about the issues that Ms. Gates had with dispatchers. Mr. Bannon explained that they are looking into sensitivity training for all dispatchers.

6.3 Update – Accessibility Assessment HRM owned/operated buildings

Councillor Watts stated that Council is entertaining a motion to increase the budget for accessibility improvements to \$400,000.

6.4 Committee Member Updates

6.4.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – *Councillor Watts*

- **Appointment of AAC Representative to Active Transportation Advisory Committee**

The Committee appointed Mr. Bob Hayter as the AAC representative to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee.

6.4.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – *Pat Gates*

Ms. Gates informed the Committee that the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group discussed the appeal process for termination of licenses, automated rate renewals, appropriate removal of roof lights and accessible taxi cabs.

6.4.3 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee – *Krista Daley*

Ms. Daley was not in attendance to provide an update on this Committee.

7. ADDED ITEMS

7.1 Service Animal Park

The Committee suggested that the Service Animal Park remain open in its current location as a smaller Service Animal Park in addition to the new, larger location. Mr. Young shared that HRM is currently looking for an appropriate location.

7.2 Accessible Parking

Mr. Nauffts asked where individuals can go to get information on creating accessible parking spots. The Chair shared that Mr. Taso Koutroulakis went through this information which can be found in the meeting minutes from February.

Councillor Watts suggested that Mr. Nauffts call 3-1-1. Councillor Craig told Mr. Nauffts to send him the reference number he is given by 3-1-1 so that the Councillor can follow up on the request.

7.3 George Dickson Centre

Mr. Clement advised that the wheelchair accessibility equipment is not working inside the gym in the George Dickson Centre. Mr. Young said that he would follow up on this.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE – April 28, 2014, 4:00 p.m., Halifax Hall, Main Floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax

9. ADJOURNMENT

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

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support

INFORMATION ITEMS - None