



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN HRM
MINUTES
April 28, 2014**

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

REGRETS: Councillor Jennifer Watts
Bob Hayter
Krista Daley, Vice Chair

STAFF: Supt. Cliff Falkenham, Halifax Regional Police
Ahmed Kidwai, Manager, Accessible Transit
Damion Stapledon, Community Recreation Planner
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to the Committee are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/access/index.html>

The meeting was called to order at 4:07 p.m., and the Committee adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax. Roll call was taken.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 17, 2014

MOVED by Ms. Patricia Gates, seconded by Councillor Steve Craig, that the minutes of March 17, 2014, be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Additions:

- 8.1 HRM Accessible Recreation– *Damion Stapledon, Coordinator, Community Recreation*
- 8.2 Construction Barricades – *Troy Nauffts*
- 8.3 Accessible Transit General Meeting

The Committee agreed to change the order of business, to begin with item 7.2, followed by item 7.1, and continue with the remainder of the agenda.

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

7.2. HRM Citizen Contact Centre – 311 Service – *Jane Young, Citizen Contact Centre*

Ms. Young introduced herself to the Committee and stated that 3-1-1 is a number that is easy to remember and it acts as a central access point for municipal government.

Enhancements to 3-1-1 include a multi-lingual service in over 150 languages provided by a third party service provider. There are also some front-end self-service options with the message changing based on current important information. The online service has been increased and improved.

The service is open 365 days with full service 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. and emergency service from 11 p.m. to 7a.m.

Ms. Young also manages customer service centres, which provide another channel for citizens to access municipal government. There are five centres.

When a call comes into the 3-1-1 centre the individual is provided with the information they are seeking or the phone operator will take down information from the caller which will allow the appropriate business unit to follow up.

Ms. Young emphasized that in order to have a record of your concern you have to call 3-1-1.

The 3-1-1 service is looking to improve their ability to better serve the hearing impaired community, options that are being looked at include online systems.

Committee members had a number of questions regarding 3-1-1 call backs.

Ms. Young explained that when a business unit actions a request they can indicate whether or not the call back has taken place. When a customer requests a call back and does not receive one they can call again with their reference number and their inquiry will be escalated to the supervisor of the appropriate business unit. Ms. Young also mentioned that all calls are recorded so that 3-1-1 can find out what has happened on given calls.

If the same complaint is made multiple times, such as snow not being removed on a street repeatedly, 3-1-1 can have a vehicle go out and do the work if it is past the service standard.

Ms. Young explained that if there is an urgent situation the issue will be fixed before a call back would take place. For example, if 3-1-1 receives a call saying that a manhole cover is open, 3-1-1 gets on a radio to dispatch immediately after the call to have the manhole cover replaced. Mr. Nauffts explained that individuals with disabilities still require a call-back because without a call to assure him that the manhole cover has been replaced, he will not go down the street.

Ms. Young explained that there are three main types of issues within the system and over three hundred codes, each with their own protocol. She emphasized that with a reference number individuals are always welcome to call back and follow up on previous calls and actions taken.

The Committee discussed that individuals with disabilities should inform 3-1-1 that they are disabled so that the operator can better understand the need for appropriate follow up.

7.1. HRM Web Services – Accessibility Update – *Kelly Marney, Web Master, & Patricia Pegley, Corporate Communications*

Ms. Patricia Pegley was unable to attend the Committee meeting. Kelly Marney, Web Master, attended to address the Committee on her behalf.

Ms. Marney was excited to inform the Committee that there will be a brand new face on the HRM website. She shared that the web team has been working on phase 1 of the Halifax.ca Refresh project. The developers have been working on accessibility aspects of all of the templates so it will be a much more accessible site. The current content will not be changing at this phase, however, in phase 2 many more aspects such as the transit schedule will be made accessible.

Individuals with a variety of accessibility issues will be testing the website over the next two weeks and all of the feedback will be taken to correct over the next phase. Their goal is to hit Priority A level of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Ms. Gates offered to send Ms. Marney the names of additional individuals to test the website.

Mr. Clement asked about the Iphone app Transit 360 which can be very useful to individuals with disabilities because it provides users with the bay number that each bus will be pulling into. Ms. Marney suggested that the open data on HRM's new website may be helpful in fixing some issues with the app. Mr. Kidwai agreed.

Ms. Marney said that the new site should be launched by the end of May. Mr. MacKenzie asked whether or not the new accessibility icon will be included on the website. Ms. Marney stated that her team is still discussing the icon.

6.3 Presentations

6.3.1 Accessible Taxi Service in HRM – *Dave Buffett, President, Halifax Taxi Drivers Owners Associaton*

An email from Mr. Buffett dated April 16, 2014 was before the Committee.

Mr. Buffet was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Kevin Hindle, Supervisor, Regional Licensing was in attendance to address Mr. Buffett's concerns and update the Committee on work his department has been undertaking in this area. Mr. Hindle informed the Committee that he came to the meeting to discuss some conversations that have been happening around accessible taxis.

Currently, HRM has 41 accessible taxis on the road while there are 1,000 conventional taxis on the road. Accessible taxis are not restricted to zones like conventional taxis and cannot be restricted to the types of calls or passengers that it services.

Accessible taxis are often unavailable to dispatchers because they have often been pre-booked. Concerns are being raised by individuals around refusal of service and service issues.

Mr. Hindle shared that there is a bold proposal that is being worked on. This proposal, if accepted, would mean that the only new taxi licenses available in HRM would be accessible ones. He explained that many members of the industry are concerned that this is a loophole, however, Mr. Hindle's concerns are around a group that is being currently under-serviced. HRM needs as many accessible taxis on the road as soon as possible.

Mr. Hindle explained that there was a meeting with the Province of Nova Scotia who said that they did not see any restrictions at this point from the provincial standpoint. They also informed HRM that if this initiative moves forward and they come across restrictions in the Motor Vehicle Act to let the province know so that it can be of assistance.

One accessible taxi has been awarded an airport license. There have been discussions around this and it has been agreed that all accessible taxis do not need an airport license. Instead, accessible taxis should be encouraged to stay in circulation and go to the airport only as needed.

Mr. Hindle stated that this proposal is in the process of negotiating right now and preparing to present to Council to move forward. The Chair explained that at Muscular Dystrophy Canada the biggest concern is to have as many accessible taxis available as possible.

Mr. Hindle suggested that if a number of accessible vehicles are needed at the same time for a meeting or a conference it is good to inform the ground transportation manager at the airport. He said that he would provide Ms. Weagle with the contact info so that Committee members have it.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES - NONE

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

6.1 Correspondence - None

6.2 Petitions – None

7. REPORTS

7.1. HRM Web Services – Accessibility Update – *Kelly Marney, Web Master, & Patricia Pegley, Corporate Communications*

This item was addressed earlier in the meeting. Refer to page 3.

7.2. HRM Citizen Contact Centre – 311 Service – *Jane Young, Citizen Contact Centre*

This item was addressed earlier in the meeting. Refer to page 2.

7.3. Update – Accessibility Assessment HRM Owned/Operated Buildings

Mr. Mackenzie thanked Committee members for working diligently on accessibility issues and the Mayor and Council for making accessibility a priority. He recommended that higher priority be placed on the outdoor environment in high-traffic areas where there are safety concerns for individuals with mobility issues such as bus stops, sidewalks or problematic curb cuts.

The Chair explained that the priority that the Committee has placed on looking at buildings was not actually in the terms of reference, but that the role of the Committee is to provide advice to Council on accessibility issues. The Chair also noted that the advisory role of the Committee allows it to have wide-reaching conversations and provide advice but that they cannot require groups to implement the advice provided by the Committee.

MOVED by Mark MacKenzie, seconded by Troy Nauffts that HRM establish a process to identify and evaluate exterior areas that are high-traffic and high-need where there may be concerns for individuals with mobility issues such as bus stops, sidewalks and problematic

curb cuts, similar to the way that the Committee assesses HRM owned/operated facilities for accessibility. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Chair and Mr. MacKenzie discussed whether or not a subcommittee should be established on physical infrastructure. It was agreed that the Committee ask Mr. Taso Koutroulakis to come and discuss exterior infrastructure and streetscaping with the Committee. Following that discussion the Committee will discuss whether it is necessary to form a subcommittee.

7.4 Committee Member Updates

7.4.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – *Bob Hayter*

Item deferred to the next meeting.

7.4.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – *Pat Gates*

Item deferred to the next meeting.

7.4.3 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee – *Krista Daley*

Item deferred to the next meeting.

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 HRM Accessible Recreation– *Damion Stapledon, Coordinator, Community Recreation*

A copy of Mr. Stapledon's presentation was before the Committee. Mr. Stapledon indicated that he would email the presentation to Ms. Weagle for electronic distribution to the Committee.

Mr. Stapledon updated that he has been involved in discussions with Dalhousie University, the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and Mount Saint Vincent University to develop training modules for seasonal inclusion support staff.

Job postings have gone out for inclusion support staff for March break camps/summer jobs and 80 applications have been submitted in response. Training modules for the Seasonal Inclusion Support Staff will also be developed in partnership with Dalhousie, Autism NS, HRSB and the IWK.

HRM has been told that they are great at modifying their mainstream program to accommodate accessibility needs, however, they need to ensure that individuals with disabilities also have specialized programming. Programming development in this area will be measured by the Services for Persons with Disabilities (SPD) Roadmap.

Community Recreation & Culture staff are developing a program and services framework that is based on research findings, best practices, aligns with legislation and involves community consultation.

The framework's service delivery model includes two Inclusion Support Coordinators, specialized programming and more comprehensive training for all staff. They are hoping to have the two Inclusion Support Coordinators in place by April 1, 2015.

The Committee provided their support for this initiative and agreed to promote and attend events related to it. Mr. Stapledon stated that he would email event information out to the Committee.

8.2 Construction Barriers - Troy Nauffts

Mr. Nauffts requested that someone present and discuss with the Committee the standards around construction barriers.

He explained that the pavement has been dug up around the Dartmouth Ferry Terminal without any barricade being erected. Mr. Nauffts said that if his dog did not come to an abrupt stop he would have fallen into a hole. While Mr. Nauffts was leaving a worker yelled over to him to be careful because there was a barrier on the ground.

The Committee discussed that the last time that this item came up there were issues around jurisdictions, Committee members recalled that construction barricades are a provincial issue and not municipal. The Committee requested the minutes from the last meeting that this issue was discussed.

8.3 Accessible Transit General Meeting

Mr. Kidwai shared that the Access-A-Bus General Meeting is taking place on Wednesday, May 28, 2014 at the Dartmouth North Community Centre from 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. The Committee requested that Ms. Weagle email all of the information out to the Committee.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – May 26, 2014

The next meeting will be held on Monday, May 26, 2014, at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support

INFORMATION ITEMS - None