



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN HRM
MINUTES
December 14, 2015**

PRESENT:

Councillor Steve Craig
Patricia Gates
Yvon Clement
Gerry Post
Krista Daley, Vice Chair
Councillor Wayne Mason
Meredith Fillmore

REGRETS:

Mikiko Terashima
Nancy Beaton

STAFF:

Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, HRM Human Resources
Darren Young, Project Manager, HRM Planning & Infrastructure
Cathy Collett, Legislative Assistant
Jenny Benson, Legislative Support
Glen Bannon, Manager, Transit Operations
Ahmad Kidawi, Manager, Accessible Transit

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.php>

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m., and the Committee adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax. Roll call was taken.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 19, 2015 and November 9, 2015

MOVED by Councillor Steve Craig, seconded by Ms. Meredith Fillmore, that the minutes of October 19, 2015, be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Ms. Meredith Fillmore, seconded by Councillor Steve Craig, that the Town Hall Meeting Minutes of November 9 2015, be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Deletions:

- 7.1.1 Correspondence from Patricia Hughes, Supervisor, Service Design & Project, Halifax Transit
- 7.1.2 Correspondence from Sue Uteck, Regional Manager, March of Dimes re: Access A Bus Service
- 7.3.2 Mr. Barry Blakeney re: Access A Bus Services

MOVED by Ms. Krista Daley, seconded by Councillor Wayne Mason, that the Order of Business be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES – None

5. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS – None

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – None

7. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

7.1 Correspondence

7.1.1 Correspondence from Sue Uteck, Regional Manager, March of Dimes re: Access A Bus Service

Correspondence from Sue Uteck, Regional Manager, March of Dimes Canada regarding Access A Bus Service was before the Committee.

Item deferred to next month.

7.1.2 Correspondence from Patricia Hughes, Supervisor, Service Design & Project, Halifax Transit

Correspondence from Patricia Hughes, Supervisor, Service Design & Project, Halifax Transit was before the Committee.

Item deferred to next month.

7.2 Petitions – None

7.3 Presentation

7.3.1 Introduction – AMI Accessible Media Inc.

Mr. Ryan Delehanty introduced himself as the Assignment Editor for Atlantic Canada with Accessible Media Inc. (AMI). He also introduced Mr. John Melville, the Vice President of Programming and Production.

Mr. Delehanty went on to provide the Committee with some background information about AMI which started as an audio channel and is now a TV channel. They broadcast stories as well as a number of shows with described video track added in to allow the blind/low vision audience to receive the same information at the same time as their sighted counterparts.

AMI Has also created their own programming that focuses on accessibility issues.

Mr. Melville explained that AMI is licenced by the CRTC as a national television channel with a mandatory Carriage Order. They are a non-profit organization that is run by a board of directors. The primary goal of AMI is to provide a channel on the Canadian cable system that reaches individuals with disabilities and keeps them informed. While the channel is national they work with communities across the country to raise awareness about community-specific accessibility issues.

The information conveyed by AMI is aimed at increasing understanding around accessibility issues amongst individuals living with disabilities as well as their family and friends. Recently, AMI produced a series called Access Unlimited that looked at livability in 5 Canadian cities including Halifax.

They have fully accessible website where more information can be acquired and where many shows can also be watched. Ami.ca provides documents, best practices, website accessibility standards etc.

AMI does not sell commercials but instead they receive funding from Canadian cable subscribers. They are going to be part of the new mandatory cable package which will hopefully give more people access to basic television services. The hope is that with this their messages around advocacy will meet more people.

Mr. Delehanty and Mr. Melville informed the Committee that they will be hosting an event on January 20th at the Central Library with Paul Vienneau as the speaker. The turnout last time was high with a diverse and energetic crowd, they are interested in keeping that momentum moving forward.

Mr. Melville mentioned that Mr. Delehanty attends Committee meetings on a regular basis and encouraged Committee members to discuss issues and possible stories with him. They are looking to engage around the topic of accessibility wherever possible. They broadcast nationally in both English and French.

Councillor Craig asked if other municipalities that AMI is working with have committees like AAC. Mr. Melville stated that while there is similar work being done they have not seen another municipality with a committee like this one.

Mr. Melville and Mr. Post discussed the ability of the channel to raise awareness about groups like the Committee as well as raising issues that are the same across the country and different approaches that governments are taking in terms of regulations and legislation.

In response to the Committee, Mr. Delehanty explained that he is keeping close track of changes in legislation and regulations provincially and nationally with the new government.

Mr. Rutt stated that AMI is doing great work and highly recommended that Committee members tune in. He noted that it is a great way to get information and look at various approaches to issues across the country.

AMI is available on Eastlink channel 888 and the audio channel is 394. AMI Currently does not have an app but they are planning to create a fully accessible app that curates all fully accessible television. A new, more visually appealing website is being launched in April and will be a precursor to the development of apps.

7.3.2 Mr. Barry Blankeney re: Access A Bus Services

Deferred to next meeting.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD – NONE

9. REPORTS/DISCUSSION

9.1 STAFF

9.1.1 Recap – 2015 Town Hall Meeting on Accessibility

The Chair asked the Committee if they had any comments regarding the Town Hall.

The Chair noted that a number of attendees would have benefitted from agendas in Braille and also that the Committee should be providing Mr. Clement with materials in Braille. The municipality used to have a Braille printer but it was discarded when the individual who operated it passed away.

The Committee requested that Ms. Cathy Collett inform Committee members of which company in Halifax did the Braille work for the Mayor's business cards.

The Chair noted that the staff did an excellent job with their presentations and answering questions. Ms. Fillmore noted that she was pleased to see the diversity of issues that were brought forward at the meeting.

Mr. Post requested that in the new year the Committee be more strategic and create a multi-year program linked to budgets and deliverables. For example, creating a 5-10 year plan on Curb Cuts linked to budget. Councillor Craig noted that the Committee is already leading accessible issues forward and may not necessarily set up to operate in the way Mr. Post is proposing.

Mr. Clement asked how other municipalities that are much more advanced in the area of accessibility are able to do things without an Accessibility Committee. Mr. Post suggested that it often relates to leadership. For example, in Vancouver the Mayor had a disability and made accessibility a priority. In other cities there is a strategic plan linked to a budget that keeps things moving forward. Mr. Post noted that he sees the Committee playing a key role in developing the framework and plan forward in Halifax.

Mr. Post suggested that it is critical for the Committee to be more engaged especially with regards to the budget process and the upcoming election. Councillor Craig noted that things are moving forward that being on the Committee means that staff and Councillors are paying attention and moving things forward. Mr. Post stated that the process is too slow.

The Committee agreed that the location and time worked well for the Town Hall and suggested they look into hosting it in Halifax Hall next year. Councillor Craig noted that this could be possible.

9.1.2 Update – Accessibility Assessment of HRM Owned/Operated Buildings

Mr. Young informed the Committee that Halifax is proceeding with upgrades to recreation facilities approved in this year's capital budget. There were 34 facilities identified with a number of them being started already. Accessible upgrades at Cole Harbour Outdoor Pool are also taking place and audits are ongoing for next year's capital work that will be focussed on administrative space.

Mr. Young noted that he is planning to look at the buttons at the library in the new year, at the request of the Chair.

Mr. Clement asked about the George Dickson Centre. A number of accessibility issues have been fixed but there continue to be concerns about general maintenance. Mr. Young suggested he call 3-1-1 to prompt a service order.

9.1.3 2016 Proposed Meeting Schedule

The Accessibility Advisory Committee Proposed 2016 Meeting Schedule was before the Committee.

MOVED by Councillor Waye Mason, seconded by Ms. Krista Daley, that the Proposed 2016 Meeting Schedule be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Mr. Clement requested that Ms. Collett re-send him the meeting schedule for 2016.

9.2 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

9.2.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – Councillor Mason

Councillor Mason discussed the positive difference that has been made for the Committee since it's Terms of Reference were amended to encourage projects to come to the Committee earlier in their developmental process. This has allowed for more input from the Active Transportation Advisory Committee than there has been in the past. It is very exciting.

Two projects were discussed at the last meeting. One was the Devonshire Bike Lane from Barrington Street to the Gottingen/Novalea/Duffus intersection which is being altered. The other was the Dartmouth Shore Drive which will be made into a more proper, well-marked path for pedestrians, wheelchairs, strollers and other users.

Mr. Clement asked if there is a tactile material that could be used at crosswalks so that individuals who with no sight or low sight can know when they are inside the crosswalk. Mr. Young stated that there is a product that Halifax is testing at the Metro Transit Terminal right now. Councillor Mason noted that one of the challenges is that the tactile materials get destroyed by snow removal machines.

Ms. Daley committed to raising this issue at the next Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee meeting. Mr. Post stated that the standard needs to be established.

The Committee requested that the work that Mr. Gerry Boyd has done is a part of the discussion at the next meeting surrounding the Red Book.

Mr. Post requested that the two Dalhousie graduate students who presented previously to the Committee return for the discussion next month.

Ms. Collett committed to reaching out to the students and making a request through Ms. Ms. Mikiko Terashima.

9.2.2 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – Gerry Post

Mr. Post shared that specific issues were raised around individuals with disabilities facing difficulties getting accessible cabs. Mr. Kevin Hindle insisted that anyone experiencing issues should log them with 3-1-1. The number of accessible taxis has been reduced from 47 to 41 because the municipality has become more stringent about enforcing accessible taxi standards.

There was a discussion around the taxi driver who was convicted of sexual assault and whether or not he should be allowed to appeal. The Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group was informed that by law the driver reserves the right to appeal.

Ms. Fillmore clarified that accessible taxi drivers do not receive any training regarding accessibility issues. She also noted that her clients use Access A Bus and her clients who have mental and physical disabilities are very well serviced.

9.2.3 Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee – Krista Daley

Ms. Daley shared that the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee is re-configuring itself.

Heads Up Halifax Crosswalk Safety Day took place on November 4th.

At the last meeting the issue of flags was discussed. If a community gets together and decides it wants to fund crosswalk flags they can. There are 50 crosswalks in Halifax that now have them. The Committee also discussed Motor Vehicle Act Amendments. The first fine on drivers, which is \$697, is also going to be on pedestrians. The Committee requested that emphasis be put more on non-monetary options such as educational aspects and asked for follow-up on that.

The Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee would like a program based on Noggin Knowledge – a program for cyclists who are caught not wearing helmets. The idea is that drivers and pedestrians who face issues in this area would receive educational information instead of large fines.

Ms. Fillmore asked if issues were raised around bicycles driving through crosswalks. Ms. Daley stated that they would like to discuss these issues with the Halifax Cycling Coalition.

The Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee will meet next in February.

9.2.4 Appointment of an AAC Representative to Active Transportation Advisory Committee

The Committee agreed that Councillor Waye Mason would continue to be the AAC Representative to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee until for the time being.

10. ADDED ITEMS – NONE

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – January 18, 2016 4:00 p.m., Halifax Hall, 2nd floor, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Jenny Benson
Legislative Support