



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN HRM
MINUTES
September 16, 2019**

PRESENT: Julia Bremner, Chair
Jillian Banfield
Elizabeth Doull
Jacki Purcell
Councillor Lisa Blackburn
Councillor Richard Zurawski

REGRETS: Victoria Levack, Vice Chair
Haylee Milne

STAFF: Tracey Jones-Grant, Managing Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Melissa Myers, Accessibility Advisor, Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Lynn Barrington, Manager – Transit Operations, Halifax Transit
Heather MacKenzie, Manager – Diversity Services, Halifax Public Libraries
Darren Young, Senior Project Manager, Corporate Facility Design & Construction
Judith Ng'ethe, Legislative Assistant, Office of the Municipal Clerk

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 at Halifax.ca

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 p.m. and the Committee adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. at Halifax Hall, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax, NS.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by Elizabeth Doull, seconded by Councillor Zurwawski

THAT the minutes of July 15, 2019 be approved as amended.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

Deletion: 9.1.1 Update – Noreen Guptill, Inclusion and Accessibility Specialist, Parks and Recreation

MOVED by Councillor Zurwaksi, seconded by Councillor Blackburn

THAT the agenda be approved as amended.

Two-third majority vote required.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Later in the meeting, the Committee consented to delete Item 10 – Appointment of Member Representative to the Taxi and Limousine Liaison Group – and reschedule it to the next meeting of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility, in order to give Committee members not present an opportunity to put themselves forward for nomination.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Correspondence – Alison Garber

Judith Ng'ethe, Legislative Assistant, informed the Committee that in line with the motion passed by the Committee at the July 15, 2019 meeting, the correspondence from Alison Garber that was circulated at that meeting was forwarded to Parks and Recreation staff. Staff indicated that with completion of the summer camps program, they were going to compile information and evaluate summer camp programs support. They would be in a position to share this information with the Committee at the Committee's next meeting.

5. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST - NONE

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

7. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATION

7.1 Correspondence - None

7.2 Petitions - None

7.3 Presentations – None

8. INFORMATION ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD – NONE

9. REPORTS/DISCUSSION

9.1 STAFF

9.1.1 Update – Noreen Guptill, Inclusion and Accessibility Specialist, Parks and Recreation

This item was deleted during the approval of the order of business.

9.1.2 Update – Darren Young, Senior Project Manager, Corporate Facility Design & Construction

Darren Young, Senior Project Manager, gave an update on accessibility improvements and upgrades to HRM facilities. Young reported on progress on shooting of the Zatzman Complex video on accessibility upgrades at the complex, installation of a lift at the Power House on Bell Street, construction of a viewing ramp at the Cole Harbour Place arena and construction of an accessible ramp direct to the Sheet Harbour public library plus upgrades to the washrooms to make them accessible, Young also noted his continued involvement in the Accessibility Sub-committee of the Rick Hansen Foundation which is having its first annual conference in October, 2019, in Toronto and which he would be attending on HRM's behalf.

9.1.3 Update – Heather MacKenzie, Manager – Diversity Services, Halifax Public Libraries

Heather MacKenzie, Manager – Diversity Services, Halifax Public Libraries, reported on providing accessible employment of two summer students from St. Mary's University who provided IT support mainly to seniors and also assisted to promote and ready the public library's CELA (Centre for Equitable Library Access) collection. MacKenzie demonstrated how to access and use the CELA organization's online service which is accessed free through the public library portal. MacKenzie reported that though the CELA collection of materials included newspapers, magazines and videos, books (also in accessible formats, including braille and audio), were the main component. Accessible books could be accessed through free downloads or on CDs delivered free to users living with disabilities. MacKenzie advised that a public library card was required to register to obtain accessible books and the user would have to self declare a disability in order to qualify. Further, the public library would also soon start lending out accessible players which play CDs in the Daisy format which is the main format that CELA materials come in and has a higher level of navigation built in than ordinary CDs. The players could also be pre-loaded with books through free wireless downloads.

MacKenzie reported that over the summer, she also worked with a Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) Halifax officer who training a group of volunteers to make presentations on successful living with vision loss. These public information sessions would be held in the public library later in the year.

Discussion on the update ensued with the requirement to self declare in order to access CELA's accessible books collection being queried. Opinion was expressed that in the spirit of true inclusion in public policy, all services should be available to all users and should not be limited to a specific category of individuals. MacKenzie undertook to communicate the concern to CELA.

Following on from the discussion of accessibility in services offered to the public, an enquiry was made regarding whether public libraries were equipped with visual systems that notify users of closing time or emergencies. Committee member Elizabeth Doull recounted her experience of being locked in a university library building after closing hours. Ms. Doull lost track of time. Being deaf, she would not have been able to hear any verbal announcement regarding imminent closure of the library and no visual alerts were issued nor a walk through conducted. MacKenzie advised that some public libraries do flash overhead lights at closing times and some conduct sweeps through rooms. MacKenzie undertook to follow up and report back to the Committee on closing procedures of public libraries in the municipality. Councillor Blackburn also undertook to bring up the issue at the next Halifax Regional Public Library Board meeting where she sits as a member, while Young agreed to reach out to Corporate Security and establish if there were any procedures in place.

The Committee discussed inclusivity of buildings and whether it was a general practice for buildings to have lock up and emergency procedures in place that could alert all occupants. The Committee noted the importance of ensuring that inclusive building procedures were incorporated in all buildings, while also acknowledging the complexity of such an undertaking. It was noted that even within municipal public

buildings in HRM, there seem to be different closure procedures. The Committee considered bringing forward a motion to ask for a staff report that would review the issue.

MOVED by Councillor Zurawski, seconded by Elizabeth Doull

THAT the Advisory Committee on Accessibility recommends that the Executive Standing Committee request a staff report to review closure procedures for all municipal public buildings with the view of making closure notification, including emergency procedures, accessible to everyone.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

9.1.4 Update – Melissa Myers, Accessibility Advisor, Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Melissa Myers, Accessibility Advisor, gave an update on the accessibility strategy that she was currently working on. Myers reported that she had met with different business units and would also be holding meetings in the wider community to get an understanding of challenges experienced. Myers reported that she had also been in contact with the Accessibility Directorate at the provincial level. Myers also indicated that she would present the draft accessibility strategy at the next Committee meeting for comments and input.

9.2 COMMITTEE

9.2.1 Planning for 2019 Town Hall Meeting on Accessibility

Ng'ethe updated the Committee on initial plans made with respect to planning of the 2019 Town Hall Meeting on Accessibility, including the search for venues, consideration of format for the Town Hall and topics of discussion. Ng'ethe advised that initial plans had been discussed by the Chair, Vice Chair and Municipal Clerk Office staff. Further, staff had visited a number of sites and assessed them for suitability for the town hall meeting.

Ng'ethe reported that the recommendation to the Committee was for the town hall meeting to be held in the Multipurpose Room of Cole Harbour Place, either on November 5, 2019 or November 19, 2019, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. Further, that the format be facilitator led with roundtable discussions aimed at receiving feedback from the community, focusing on four issues determined in advance by the Committee and disseminated to the public before the town hall meeting. Ng'ethe reported that a pool of seven topics had been compiled with the intention that the Committee select four. The topics were: public facilities; transportation (transit and taxis); roads and sidewalks; recreation; affordable accessible housing; food security; employment.

Ng'ethe requested input and comments from the Committee with respect to the proposed format. The following feedback was received:

- Traditionally, the venue of the town hall meeting altered between Halifax and Dartmouth. As the 2018 town hall meeting had been held in Dartmouth, the 2019 town hall meeting was due to be held on the Halifax side.
- The proposed format was more of a consultation and not a town hall. The annual town hall was set up to give the community feedback on what the municipality had achieved each year in terms of accessibility.
- It might be challenging to have effective participation using the roundtable format due to the challenges of providing support, such as ASL interpreters, at several areas simultaneously

The Committee discussed the feedback and noted the importance of gaining the rural perspective and the different demographic that would be served by holding the town hall meeting at the Cole Harbour Place venue. The thinking behind altering the format, namely to make the meeting more inclusive and inviting, with several discussion groups resulting in more feedback being provided, was also discussed. It was noted that it was possible to combine the two formats, providing for high level reporting of successes and

challenges and thereafter break out to deliberate on selected topics. The Committee also perused the list of proposed topics and noted the importance of not setting up false expectations that may occur should some of the topics be picked. It was noted, for instance, that the Municipality had a very limited role in housing and did not have any impact on accessible affordable housing.

The Committee also discussed the importance of securing sufficient numbers of ASL interpreters and sighted guides and further noted that community health boards and Councillor newsletters would be efficient means of reaching residents in their catchment areas to inform them of the Town Hall meeting.

MOVED by Councillor Blackburn, seconded by Jacki Purcell

THAT the Advisory Committee on Accessibility:

- 1. Secure the date of November 19, 2019 from 6:00-8:00 p.m. as the date of the 2019 Town Hall meeting on accessibility and the Multipurpose Room at Cole Harbour Place as the venue; and**
- 2. Approve a traditional town hall meeting format with high level reporting on successes and challenges from Corporate Facility Design & Construction, Halifax Transit, Transportation and Public Works and Parks and Recreation followed by breakout roundtable discussions on public facilities, public transportation, roads and public walkways and recreation.**

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

9.3 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

9.3.1 Active Transportation Advisory Committee – Jillian Banfield

Jillian Banfield advised that there was no update as the Active Transportation Advisory Committee had not met since the date of the last meeting of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility.

10. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER REPRESENTATIVE TO THE TAXI AND LIMOUSINE LIAISON GROUP

The following was before the Advisory Committee on Accessibility:

- A Motion Memorandum

This item was deleted from the agenda and rescheduled to the next meeting of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility.

11. ADDED ITEMS - NONE

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – October 21, 2019 - 4:00 p.m., Halifax Hall, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax

The Committee noted that this is federal election day.

MOVED by Councillor Zurawski, seconded by Jacki Purcell

THAT the Advisory Committee on Accessibility change the date of the October, 2019 meeting from October 21, 2019 to October 28, 2019 at 4:00 p.m. at a venue to be determined by the Office of the Municipal Clerk.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

13. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

Judith Ng'ethe
Legislative Assistant