



**ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE TOWN HALL MEETING
MINUTES
November 17, 2022**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Andrew Taylor, Chair
Jacki Purcell, Vice Chair
Councillor Cathy Deagle Gammon
Councillor Trish Purdy
Kristen Hemming
Rachele Manett
Jordan Waterbury

REGRETS: Councillor Paul Russell
Michelle Mahoney
Elizabeth Doull
Nicole McDonald

STAFF PANEL: Melissa Myers, Accessibility Advisor, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African
Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office
Darren Young, Manager of Building Infrastructure, Property Fleet &
Environment
Victoria Horne, Director of Parking, Public Works
Lindsay Mullin, Outreach and Engagement Specialist, Halifax Transit
Services
Dave Nantau, Supervisor of Bus Operations, Halifax Transit
Pat McGrath, Manager of Aquatic & Inclusion Services, Parks & Recreation
Tracey Jones-Grant, Managing Director, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/
African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office

OTHERS PRESENT: Annie Sherry, Legislative Assistant
Alicia Wall, Legislative Support

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

The agenda, reports, supporting documents, and information items circulated are online at halifax.ca.

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. and adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. in Paul O'Regan Hall, Halifax Central Library, 5440 Spring Garden Road, and acknowledged that the meeting took place in the traditional and ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people, and that we are all treaty people.

The Chair welcomed all in attendance and encouraged attendees to share their feedback. The Chair advised that the panel members would be providing updates on current projects and sharing successes and challenges faced by the Municipality with respect to accessibility.

2. STAFF OVERVIEW OF ACCESSIBILITY SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES AND UPDATES

Melissa Myers, Accessibility Advisor, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office spoke to the work done on the Accessibility Strategy to date and other action items undertaken by various Business Units including the inclusive playground at the George Dixon Centre, accessible communications, and policies to support equitable employment and inclusiveness in the workplace. Myers noted that new ways to improve accessibility and inclusion are an ongoing effort.

Darren Young, Manager of Building Infrastructure, Property, Fleet & Environment provided updates on accessibility projects:

- The washroom at Fort Needham Park is finished;
- Accessible beach mats are now available at Campbell Point Beach;
- Construction has started on the Kiwanis Grahams Grove Park facility;
- Upgrades to the universal change room at the Canada Games Centre are finished;
- Work at the Dartmouth North Community Centre will be completed shortly;
- The Woodside Ferry Terminal renovations have been completed;
- The Halifax Commons Pool facility is under construction; and
- The installation of a modernized elevator at Alderney Landing is in the works.

Young further noted that two additional staff have completed the Rick Hansen Foundation Certification, the automatic door program is still underway, work is being done with the Province of Nova Scotia to develop standards to audit current accessibility conditions, and challenges include renovating existing buildings and staff resources.

Victoria Horne, Director of Parking, Public Works spoke to the work being done to ensure public safety and accessibility for walking, rolling, driving, and accessing municipal infrastructure including designing the built environment on HRM's streets, sidewalks and pathways, the Cogswell Interchange project, training snow clearing contractors on accessibility awareness and clearing standards, and conducting the accessible parking space audit.

Lindsay Mullin, Outreach and Engagement Specialist, Halifax Transit Services and Dave Nantau, Supervisor of Bus Operations, Access-A-Bus spoke to the progress made by Halifax Transit in improving accessibility with respect to bus stops and infrastructure, educational programs, launching an accessible taxi service and Access-A-Bus updates including installing mobile data tools on every vehicle to track the location in real time. Mullin further noted that the Woodside Ferry Terminal project is now complete and is fully accessible.

Pat McGrath, Manager of Aquatic & Inclusion Services, Parks and Recreation spoke to training and staffing changes including adding a third Inclusion and Accessibility Specialist, adding an Outdoor Aquatic Inclusion position, the Angelfish training program, trauma sensitive workshops and providing additional training to staff developed by Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) for newcomers in recreation. McGrath highlighted initiatives including specialized lifejackets at indoor pools, the new plan

for Peace and Friendship Park to commemorate Indigenous history, accessible bleachers at fields and ball diamonds and gender-neutral upgrades to various washrooms.

3. FEEDBACK, INPUT, QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Chair reviewed the ground rules and opened up the floor for the public to share their feedback.

Carrie-Ann Bugden expressed concerns around access to accessible affordable housing in HRM and inquired as to whether there is any funding available to assist.

Darren Young, Manager of Building Infrastructure, Property, Fleet & Environment responded that housing is a Provincial mandate.

Paul Vienneau noted the importance of using the word accessible in conjunction with affordable housing as they should go hand in hand.

Andrew Janzten expressed concerns around accessing beach mats as sometimes there is a lot of sand between the path to the beach and the mats themselves which can be difficult to navigate and would like to see something done to address this issue.

Pat McGrath, Manager of Aquatic & Inclusion Services, Parks and Recreation advised that work is being done to make beaches more accessible for everyone.

Shawn Clarke asked about the new transit app and whether or not people who use voice readers with screen curtains on their phones will still be able to use the app and take advantage of the reduced cost for a transit pass.

Lindsay Mullin, Outreach and Engagement Specialist, Halifax Transit Services noted that they believed this was the case and offered to take the speaker's information and to provide an answer to the speaker at a later date.

Danielle Tremblay asked about legal supports with respect to employability and whether there are any plans on making these supports available.

Tracey Jones-Grant, Managing Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO noted this question would be better suited for Human Resources, and that staff would provide an answer to the speaker at a later date.

Jim McDermott shared they were pleased with the visual bus announcements and that HRM has been providing interpreters at events such as the tree lighting. Concerns were expressed around the lack of visual alerts for alarms in buildings.

Young noted that new construction buildings are required to have visual alerts for alarms as per the Building Code.

Bill Jordan asked if the wheelchair ramps/aprons on buses are monitored on a regular basis to ensure they are in good working order.

Dave Nantau, Supervisor of Bus Operations, Access-A-Bus noted that the ramps are produced to a standard and are made specifically to fit the bus.

Lui Greco, CNIB noted that electric buses can pose a safety risk to people who are blind and asked if Halifax Transit is working on an acoustic vehicle alerting system and noted that Ferry terminal downtown needs a better wayfinding strategy to get from the Ferry Terminal to Lower Water Street.

Mullin indicated that acoustics will be programmed for outside and inside the electric buses.

Young responded that tactile indicators around the Ferry Terminal are being looked at.

Hannah Brown asked if anything be done about scents in public spaces.

Young indicated that no scent signs will be included in the signage package going out to facilities and that staff would have to enforce the no scent policy at facilities.

Jennifer Schwartz asked if Access-A-Bus will be using the new transit app and who should be contacted about accessibility buttons that are missing or not working.

Young responded that issues around accessibility buttons can be reported to 311.

Nantau confirmed that Access-A-Bus will be using the new app also.

Danielle Tremblay expressed concerns around the lack of transit in certain areas and asked if expanding transit is being looked at.

Nantau noted that extending transit service boundaries would have to be approved by Regional Council.

Gerry Post shared that they were very pleased with the new accessible taxi service and would like to see bus service to Peggy's Cove offered at certain times. It was also noted that offering free conventional bus passes to Access-A-Bus users may open up more spots on Access-A-Bus.

Celine Vautour expressed sensory concerns with different buildings and asked if this is being looked at when constructing buildings.

Young responded that the universal design principles are being followed with new construction and that these principles take sensory needs into consideration.

4. ENVISIONING A MORE ACCESSIBLE FUTURE – OPEN FLOOR

Tracey Jones-Grant, Managing Director, Office of Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO opened the visioning session and encouraged attendees to share their thoughts on the biggest accessibility concerns facing the Municipality in 2023 and provide feedback on the format of the Town Hall in order to inform the work of the Accessibility Advisory Committee moving forward. Jones-Grant further spoke to the role of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Carrie-Ann Bugden shared that they would like the Committee to look at issues around accessible, affordable housing and any funding that may be available.

Jimmy McDermott indicated there is a lot of technology available to assist the deaf and hard of hearing community and would like to see these technologies implemented, and that HRM should work various stakeholders to find ways to implement them.

Shawn Clarke expressed frustration around getting a doctor's note to register for Access-A-Bus given the current state of the healthcare system and would like to see HRM work with companies like CNIB and Easter Seals to make the process easier.

Dave Nantau, Supervisor of Bus Operations, Access-A-Bus noted that professionals other than doctors, such as Registered Nurses, Physiotherapists, Speech Therapists, etc. can provide a note to qualify for Access-A-Bus services.

Darryl MacDonald expressed concerns around the misuse of accessible parking spots.

A community member expressed concerns around the lack of visual cues for alarms in buildings around the HRM.

Danielle Tremblay expressed concerns around disconnected/siloed services that are difficult to navigate, affordability of quality of life, access to transportation options, gatekeeping employment practices that only allow a select few to succeed and lack of enforcement with employers, healthcare and treatment plans that are considered acceptable, lack of street signs, lack of scent releasing devices in buildings, and old infrastructure without ramps/elevators.

Una Larkin shared that they would like to see bus service to Peggy's Cove and for the HRM to do more to highlight issues with accessible accommodations in the hospitality industry.

Shawn Clarke shared that they would like a system to assist with finding parking for people with disabilities and for HRM to allow people with accessible parking passes to be able to park anywhere without having to use the pay stations.

Lui Greco shared that they were pleased with the townhall process and would like to see better enforcement around ensuring construction sites are accessible and obstacle free.

Paul Blauuw shared that they would like to see a Provincial liaison at these meetings in future.

Amy Smeltzer shared that they would also like to see better enforcement of accessibility at construction sites and signage being placed on sidewalks and in bike lanes.

Elizabeth Doull expressed concerns around the lack of visual alerts for alarms and safety for people with accessible needs and seniors.

Dan O'Brien, CNIB shared that they would like to see better maintenance at the designated service dog park as there are a lot of holes in the ground and a sinking picnic table.

Una Larkin shared that they would like to see the Province and HRM work together more to save resources.

Gerry Post shared that they would like to see developers penalized if the construction site is not free of obstacles and poses accessibility challenges.

Shawn Clarke shared that they liked the Townhall process but would like to see it held in different locations in the future.

5. CLOSING COMMENTS

The Chair thanked the panel and the public for attending and noted that the concerns have been heard by staff and work would begin on the issues raised.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Alicia Wall
Legislative Support