



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBILITY IN HRM
MINUTES
April 16, 2018**

- PRESENT:** Ryan Delehanty, Vice Chair
Deputy Mayor Wayne Mason
Councillor Lisa Blackburn
Zainab Almkhtar
Jillian Banfield
Julia Bremner
Johanna Stork
- REGRETS:** Patricia Gates, Chair
Kristine Webber
- STAFF:** Carl Purvis, Planning Application Program Manager, Planning & Development
Jacob Ritchie, Urban Design Program Manager, Planning & Development,
Darren Young, Project Manager, Senior Project Manager, Corporate Facility Design & Construction
Heather MacKenzie, Diversity & Accessibility Manager, Halifax Public Libraries
Tracey Jones-Grant, Manager, Diversity & Inclusion
Noreen Guptill, Inclusion and Accessibility Specialist, Parks and Recreation
Kayla Douglas, Accessibility Intern, Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Liam MacSween, Legislative Assistant
Simon Ross-Siegel, 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 4:02 p.m., and the Committee adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 26, 2018

It was noted that Tracy Jones-Grant was present at the meeting, though was not noted in the minutes, and also that Heather MacKenzie was not present at the meeting, though it was noted in the minutes. Darren Young noted that he wished to express several corrections regarding his updates (Item 9.1.3), and he agreed to forward a list of these to staff.

MOVED by Councillor Lisa Blackburn, seconded by Johanna Stork,

THAT the minutes of February 26, 2018 be approved as amended.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

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

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Waye Mason, seconded by Zainab Almukhtar,

THAT the agenda be approved as presented.

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 – NONE

8. INFORMATION ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD – NONE

9. REPORTS

9.1 STAFF

9.1.1 Update on Centre Plan

The following was before the Advisory Committee on Accessibility:

- A staff presentation “Introduction to the Draft ‘Package A’ Centre Planning Documents” dated April 16, 2018.

Jacob Ritchie, Urban Design Program Manager, Planning & Development, spoke before the Committee about the Centre Plan. He also answered questions from the Committee about the Centre Plan, and in particular how the plan guides and anticipates to further goals related to accessibility and accessible living and services in the municipality. Jacob Ritchie’s presentation covered:

- The core concepts of the Centre Plan (ex. Pedestrian Centred Design, Strategic Growth, etc.);
- Built Form Transitions;

- The use of a Gross Floor Area Ratios (GFAR), and how these are intended to be used as an incentive to increasing affordable housing;
- New formal allowances and guidelines regarding urban agriculture, green roofs and electric vehicle charging stations;
- The four area designations in the Centre Plan (Centres, Corridors, Higher Order Residential, and Future Growth Nodes); and
- Previously completed and further planned public consultation.

Several Committee Members asked whether the Centre Plans walking estimates are reasonable for older less mobile residents, and whether the plan contemplates other measures to improve mobility for seniors. Jacob Ritchie responded that the walking distance figures are intended to set minimal goals for development, but not to act as a limit on walkability. Furthermore, there are significant goals and guidelines thought the Centre Plan which are intended to improved transit connectivity, which in turn are intended to improve access for mobility challenged persons. While the Centre Plan cannot and does not dictate policy to Halifax Transit, the plan engages in broad discussion with other city departments under the expectation that they too will invest in policies intended to improve accessibility. Furthermore, the Centre Plan opens zoning uses in the four area designations to help ensure services can locate themselves close to the people who require their services.

Several Committee Members asked what efforts contemplated in the Centre Plan are specifically aimed to address rental unaffordability. Members expressed that in many instances, community members complain that so called “affordable housing” was still unaffordable to many community members. Jacob Ritchie expressed that this was a serious concern for planners under the Centre Plan. One way in which the plan addresses this concern is to ensure that planning does not encourage removal or careless redevelopment of the existing affordable housing which currently exists.

9.1.2 Update on Corporate Facility Design & Construction

Darren Young, Project Manager, Senior Project Manager, Corporate Facility Design & Construction, spoke before the Committee. In May, there is a draft for an administrative order on Universal Access which is expected to come before Regional Council. Darren Young discussed several aspects of the draft with the Committee:

- Much of the terminology used in the draft mirrors that used by the office of Diversity & Inclusion, thanks to valuable input from Tracey Jones-Grant;
- A major difference between other orders is that this draft attempts to define “major renovations”, in this case meaning renovations requiring major engineering and architectural planning, or contract services, as an estimated construction value of at least \$50,000.00, or an estimated economic life of at least ten years;
- Several of the guidelines and principles regarding universal design are identified in the draft including providing universal access, providing equal opportunity for all users, avoiding segregation and stigmatization of all users, considering privacy, security and safety, accommodating a range of options and preferences for all users, and making things comfortable and reachable from seated or standing position;
- The draft uses the B651 Framework, a CSA Standard;
- Referencing ISO 7000 graphic symbols for standards to communicate information.
- The draft contains a consultation provision which states that HRM Regional Council will consult with the Advisory Committee on Accessibility on an annual basis or, should it desire, more frequently.

Darren proposed that since the current draft was not before the committee at this time, Committee could discuss this item following the May 22, 2018 meeting of Regional Council, at the Advisory Committee of Accessibility’s May 28, 2016 meeting. Darren Young proposed to circulate a draft of the administrative order as an information item at that meeting for further discussion.

9.1.3 Update on Halifax Public Libraries Diversity & Accessibility Initiatives

Heather MacKenzie, Diversity & Accessibility Manager, Halifax Public Libraries, spoke before the Committee.

Halifax Public Libraries has hosted some successful story time programs in partnership with Gerry Post, Accessibility Director, and his colleague Amy Middleton. The program is called "Readability", and sessions involve guests with various disabilities reading aloud for story times. These sessions focus on the abilities that people have, not their disability, and give children the message that everyone can tell a story in various ways (reading aloud from Braille, using ASL etc.)

Also, Halifax Public Libraries received a small donation around December of 2017 with which it purchased two additional DAISY readers, a device which reads specially formatted DAISY audio CDs that allow persons with sight impairments to navigate audio books by page, section, chapter etc. These navigational tools are not present in regular audio book CDs.

The Halifax Public Libraries' intends to lend these devices out along with its' collection of DAISY audio books from CELA (Centre for Equitable Library Access), to persons interested in trying the readers from home and to let people try the technology before they make the investment. We will start with a pilot project with lending the devices/ CDs to Home Delivery clients. Staff confirmed that DAISY Readers often cost somewhere in the range of \$500 and above, and Halifax Public Libraries currently has four.

The Halifax Public Libraries will be partnering with the Fred Smithers Institute, Saint Mary's University. The institute provides academic support for students with disabilities and has a Summer Job Placement project. In this project, Halifax Public Libraries will be hiring a student to provide IT support for seniors in some of Halifax Public Libraries' branches.

9.1.4 Update

This item was not addressed at this meeting of the Committee and will be addressed at a future meeting of the Committee.

9.1.5 Update

Tracey Jones-Grant, Manager, Diversity & Inclusion, spoke before the Committee. Throughout the Month of March, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion held consultations on disability. The Office expects to receive the consultant's report this week, and the office is preparing an information report it intends to deliver to CPED on May 22, 2018. It also hopes to deliver this report as an information item to the Advisory Committee on Accessibility at its meeting in May.

The consultations were enormously successful, and Tracey Jones-Grant thanked all participants, facilitators and volunteers for their generous efforts. Regarding feedback from the consultations, Tracey Jones-Grant stated that the office also heard from service providers that they did not feel it was their place to speak in place of persons with disabilities for these consultations, so the office is planning to hold two further special consultations, one for service providers and another at the rehab centre.

9.1.6 Committee appointment to Active Transportation Advisory Committee

Liam MacSween, Legislative Assistant, spoke before the Committee, and regarding the appropriate course of action to call for a nomination.

Vice Chair Ryan Delehanty called for nominations for the position of Representative to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee. Deputy Mayor Wayne Mason nominated Jillian Banfield. Ryan Delehanty called three times for any further nominations, hearing none, Jillian Banfield was appointed Representative to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee.

Committee Members clarified that the Active Transportation Advisory Committee meets on the third Thursday of the month at 4:00 p.m., in the in Halifax Hall, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Wayne Mason, seconded by Johanna Stork

THAT the Advisory Committee for Accessibility in HRM appoint Jillian Banfield to serve as the Advisory Committee for Accessibility in HRM representative on the Active Transportation Advisory Committee.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

9.1.7 Planning for 2018 Town Hall Meeting on Accessibility

The following was before the Advisory Committee on Accessibility:

- A staff presentation of composed of photos of the two proposed venue locations

Liam MacSween, Legislative Assistant, spoke before the Committee, and updated the Committee regarding efforts to select a venue for the 2018 Town Hall Meeting on Accessibility. Liam MacSween stated that several issues and staff shortages have lengthened the process. Following conversations with Chair Patricia Gates, staff was able to identify and evaluate several venues and accessibility issues.

The first considered venue was the Mic Mac Amateur Aquatic Club in Dartmouth. Staff identified several accessibility issues, including a limited number of accessible parking spots, some cracks in the entrance walkway, and a location which was relatively remote to the nearest transit stops. There was however an elevator in the venue as well as automatic doors. Staff also stated that the meeting space was also potentially restrictively small for the purposes of holding an effective town hall.

The second considered venue was the Dartmouth North Community Centre, Dartmouth. Staff stated that it was staff's opinion that of the venues considered, this was the best venue for the Town Hall. This venue is owned by the municipality, has accessible doors, and is located adjacent to a transit terminal. There are curb cuts on the surrounding sidewalks, and there is an adequately large parking lot within which several spots could be reserved for accessible parking. There is a relatively short distance from the outside the facility into the main area which is a large gymnasium able to accommodate an occupancy of 100 people. Staff identified own possible issue regarding metal spacers between double doors, however, Darren Young expressed his confidence that these are removable and could be dismantled prior to the event.

Staff proposed to push the Town Hall back a month or to select another date so that the Committee could secure the use of the better venue. Committee Members considered a few options and many expressed that September or October were the best dates for a possible new date for the Town Hall.

Committee Member also discussed the past consideration of Alderney-Landing as a possible venue option. Staff stated that they had indeed considered this option however, they expressed at that time that the rental quote was quite high. Committee Members also confirmed that it has traditionally been the policy of the Committee to alternate between Halifax and Dartmouth venues.

Committee Members expressed general support for the use of the Dartmouth North Community Centre, as well as for the proposal to postpone the Town Hall in its current May date in order to secure this venue. Liam MacSween offered to return to the Committee with new proposed dates, and would add this as an item in the next agenda for the Committee.

9.2 COMMITTEE

9.2.1 Pat Gates – Letter of Thanks for Ahmed Kidwai

Liam MacSween, Legislative Assistant, spoke before the Committee, and stated that Chair Patricia Gates had expressed a desire for the Committee to issue a letter of thanks to Ahmed Kidwai in light of his extensive contributions to the Advisory Committee on Accessibility.

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Wayne Mason, seconded by Johanna Stork

THAT a letter of thanks be issued to Ahmed Kidwai from the Advisory Committee on Accessibility.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

9.3 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

9.3.1 Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group – Johanna Stork

Johanna Stork updated the Committee on the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group. A report is being prepared which the group hopes will be before Council in March. Also, starting this month Tourism Nova Scotia will be taking over training for taxi licensing and Tourism Industry Association Nova Scotia (TIANS) will be conducting the testing. Part of the course will focus on service professionalism, passengers in vulnerable situations, driver safety, and accessibility for passengers.

10. ADDED ITEMS

Councillor Lisa Blackburn inquired in follow-up to Correspondence from Barry Blakeney previously forwarded to Halifax Transit regarding Access-A Bus service if Staff has received a response. Liam MacSween stated that correspondence was forwarded on the February 26, 2018 meeting of the Committee, staff has received no response as of yet, and staff undertook to follow up on this item.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – May 28, 2018 – 4:00 p.m., Halifax Hall, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Simon Ross-Siegel
Legislative Support