



Accessibility Advisory Committee

MINUTES

Wednesday, May 24, 2023

Open to public attendance in Committee Room G

Lower Level, City Hall

Committee members may attend electronically

PRESENT:

Anne Bélanger*	Chair, Committee Member
Karen Basran	Human Resources Business Partner
Taryn Bruckshaw*	Committee Member
Iris Cheng*	Committee Member
Hazel Fitzpatrick*	Committee Member
Nancy Kato	Committee Member
Vic Leach	Committee Member
Susan MacAndrew	Committee Member
Karla Olson	Committee Member
Wendy Parry*	Committee Member
Julia Schoennagel	Committee Member

REGRETS:

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	Chair
Shannon Dolton	Committee Member

GUESTS:

Miles Ambridge*	Student/Community Member
-----------------	--------------------------

STAFF PRESENT:

Mike Anderson	Manager of Transportation
Hailey Finnigan	Communications Coordinator
Corrinne Garrett	Senior Manager, Recreation Facilities and Programs
Carilyn Cook	Committee Clerk

*Denotes electronic attendance

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Anne Bélanger, Chair, opened the meeting at 5:34 p.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. She acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. She recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

2. INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions took place.

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT Miles Ambridge be allowed to participate in the Committee discussion today and the next two meetings.

Carried.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT New Business Item 7.1 - Information Regarding Hazel Fitzpatrick's Civil Volunteer Position at the New Westminster Police Department be added to the agenda.

Carried.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 April 26, 2023

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Minutes of the April 26, 2023 Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted as circulated.

Carried.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

5. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

5.1 Organization Accessibility Plan

Karen Basran, Human Resources Business Partner, advised that given the volume of feedback received at the last meeting regarding Employment accessibility, the Committee would continue that conversation prior to addressing today's focus areas.

The Committee participated brainstorming exercises, responding to the following questions for each focus area:

- What are some barriers individuals experience within or when interacting with the City of New Westminster?
- Consider barriers that can be caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications, or technologies.

The following comments arose from the continued discussion on Employment:

A Committee member shared the challenges she faces when seeking employment including that most positions are fulltime. She noted that, while the inclusivity statement on City's job postings encourages people to express their interest in a position, it put the onus on the applicant rather than the City making a change to be inclusive. She advised that resumes should be reviewed taking into account the experiences of disabled applicants and not just of those without challenges and who can work full time. She referred to the Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) job posting inclusivity statement which reads as follows:

Kwantlen Polytechnic University welcomes and encourages applications from equity deserving groups and diverse experiences including, but not limited to, Indigenous people, racialized people, people with disabilities, and members of the 2S/LGBTQIA+ community.

*If there are any barriers that you are experiencing or an accommodation that we can provide to support you through the application process, please reach out to us at **humanresources@kpu.ca**.*

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- This is an action item for the City to update language around recruitment;
- Resumes should be looked at through a lens that may lead to accommodating applicants and possibly hiring two people to share one full time position;
- The Disability Alliance BC Guide includes a lot of different ideas of employment accommodations which many people with disabilities are unaware of; and,
- It is good that the KPU inclusivity statement puts the onus on the employer to do something different in order to facilitate diversity.

It was noted that in addition to the KPU inclusivity statement, the job posting also included the following information:

Does this role sound like it was made for you, yet you don't check every box?

We at KPU understand that experiences and qualifications may look differently for everyone and, if this job description is of interest to you, we encourage you to apply.

Discussion continued and Committee members noted the following:

- Many with disabilities would not apply for a full time position if it was not noted that accommodations could be made to address issues such as not being able to work full time;
- New Westminster does not offer to address barriers or challenges faced by interested applicants;
- Having to work 35 hours per week would deter many people from applying for a position as most are unaware that requesting to work part time is an option; and,
- The KPU posting seems more approachable and open and puts the onus on the University in a “talk to us, maybe we can arrange something” kind of way.

a. Information and Communication

The following comments arose from the brainstorming discussion on Information and Communication:

- The City website is difficult to navigate and not user-friendly due to:
 - Odd groupings – you need to know which drop down to go to find the information you are seeking;
 - Dropdowns are neither intuitive nor alphabetical;
 - No explanation as to what the city does and services it is responsible for, including what aspect of city services each department is responsible for; and,
 - No translation options are offered such as what is on the Province of British Columbia vaccination website; however, it does have a Google translate button at the top of the site.
- City Hall could be more welcoming to those unfamiliar with local government, including newcomers to Canada;
- Need to use plain language in communications, not “City Hall” speak; and,
- Use of words such as “diversity” can be confusing as it may mean different things to different people.

b. Built Environment

In response to a question from a Committee member, Corrinne Garrett, Senior Manager, Recreation Facilities and Programs, advised that there will be a variety of options to get people of all abilities, including those using mobility devices, into the pools at the new t̄m̄əsew̄tx̄w Aquatic and Community Centre, and that all staff will be trained to assist visitors getting in and out of the pools. She noted that visibility buffers will be added to the fixtures and equipment list and encouraged Committee members to email other accessibility enhancing fixture or equipment suggestions to her.

The following comments arose from the brainstorming discussion on the Built Environment:

- The zoning bylaw regarding accessible parking stalls needs to be updated to increase the number of accessible stalls required;
- The City must plan for the mobility issues that come with an aging population;
- Many people with disabilities are low-income and do not qualify for credit cards and pay parking should accommodate that;

- No fee or low fee residential parking permits could be offered to those with low income and/or disabilities;
- Different placards for those with disabilities could be implemented so they do not have to pay for parking in city spots. This is done in Portland, Oregon;
- Signal timing should take into account the width of the roadway being crossed and the length of the curb ramp;
- Snow must be cleared from curb ramps and lane crossings, as well as sidewalks;
- Wet leaves should not be blown onto sidewalks nor bike lanes;
- With respect to accessible parking spots, consideration should be given to:
 - Providing them free of charge;
 - Having a minimum number of spots per city block to accommodate visitors, etc.;
 - Looking into the abuse of accessible parking;
 - Not using accessible spaces to store snow when it is removed from other parking spots; and,
 - Ensuring that they are wide enough to comfortably accommodate larger vehicles and side loading vans.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

6.1 Organization Accessibility Plan

a. Service Delivery

The following comments arose from the brainstorming discussion on Service Delivery:

- The holding cells at the New Westminster Police Department need to be made more accessible;
- It is very challenging to access the Police Station, especially after hours; and,
- It would be helpful to know the training Police Officers and staff receive with respect to accessibility.

Procedural note: Accessibility at the New Westminster Police Department will be added to the next agenda for further discussion.

Corrinne Garrett, Senior Manager, Recreation Facilities and Programs, advised that staff have been reviewing all recreation facilities including Century House, Queensborough Recreation Centre, Queens Park Arena, and Moody Park Arena. She shared that accessibility audits were conducted last year which will help prioritize action items that need to be addressed in certain facilities. She offered to provide an update at a future Committee meeting.

Ms. Garrett noted that, in the future, staff will be looking for recommendations and feedback from the Committee regarding the gender-specific washrooms in the older facilities.

In response to a question from a Committee member, Ms. Garrett stated that technology will be in place at the təməsewtxw Aquatic and Community Centre to guide people through the inside of the facility. She will report back as to whether this will be implemented on the outside of the facility as well.

Ms. Garrett offered to return to the Committee with a presentation on the accessible features of the təməsewtxw Aquatic and Community Centre, including whether or not NaviLens will be used on site for those with vision challenges.

Discussion ensued and Committee members noted the following:

- The washroom facilities at Grimston Park are very old and not very well lit. Retrofitting of those facilities could include more single-stall secure options; and,
- The stairs at Grimston Park are not very accessible as they are on a very steep slope.

In response to a question from a Committee member, Mike Anderson, Manager of Transportation, advised that in the immediate term the Committee's task is to develop an Accessibility Plan which is required by the Provincial Government and that once that is done, a deeper dive will be done on issues such as parking.

Karen Basran, Human Resources Partner, shared that the first version of the Accessibility Plan would be an outline of focus areas, how they will be focused on, and the research steps that will be undertaken.

In response to the Committee's concern that no staff with disabilities would be working on the Plan, Ms. Basran noted that this could be one of the objectives in the Plan but advised that it can be challenging as sometimes people do not want to label themselves.

A Committee member advised that the Walkers' Caucus is interested in creating an accredited group consisting of seniors, someone who uses a wheel chair, and a person who is blind to ensure that curb ramps, push buttons, etc., are appropriately installed. He noted that they have put this to the Provincial Government and hope it can be done locally, including training people to work with staff to provide input into these types of upgrades. Staff advised that this suggestion would be considered for the Accessibility Plan.

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.1 Information Regarding Hazel Fitzpatrick's Civil Volunteer Position at the New Westminster Police Department

Procedural note: In the interest of time, this item was deferred to the next meeting.

8. END OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 7:22 p.m.

9. UPCOMING MEETINGS

June 28
July 26
August 23
September 27
October 25
November 22

Certified correct,

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk