



Accessibility Advisory Committee

MINUTES

Wednesday, January 24, 2024, 5:30 p.m.

Open to public attendance in Committee Room G

Lower Level, City Hall

Committee members may attend electronically

PRESENT:

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	Chair
Karen Basran	Human Resources Business Partner
Shannon Dolton*	Committee Member
Hazel Fitzpatrick*	Committee Member
Nancy Kato	Committee Member
Vic Leach	Committee Member
Karla Olson	Committee Member
Julia Schoennagel	Committee Member

REGRETS:

Anne Bélanger	Committee Member
Taryn Bruckshaw	Committee Member
Iris Cheng	Committee Member

GUEST:

Karin Pasqua	Meaningful Access
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STAFF PRESENT:

Mike Anderson	Manager of Transportation, Engineering
Hailey Finnigan	Communications Coordinator, Office of the CAO
Chris Koth	Manager of Programs and Community Development, Library
Carilyn Cook	Committee Clerk, Legislative Services

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Councillor McEvoy 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. He acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. He recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

2. INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions took place.

3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

The following items were added to the agenda:

- Item 6.1 – Terminology; and
- Item 6.2 – Letters of Support for New Westminster Police Department Local Community Accessibility Grant Applications

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 **September 27, 2023**

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Minutes of the September 27, 2023 Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted as circulated.

Carried.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

4.2 **October 25, 2023**

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Minutes of the October 25, 2023 Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted as circulated.

Carried.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

4.3 **November 22, 2023 (Notes)**

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Notes of the November 27, 2023 Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted with the following amendment:

- Under Item 6.1 Local Community Accessibility Grant Application, with respect to the letter of support for the New Westminster Police Department's grant application that "all Committee members were in agreement" be removed from the minutes.

Carried.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

5. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

5.1 Draft Accessibility Plan

a. Presentation (On Table)

Karen Basran, Human Resources Business Partner, introduced Karin Pasqua of Meaningful Access Consulting, who provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the City's draft accessibility plan.

Procedural note: Due to technical difficulties the Committee took a break from 6:19 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Ms. Pasqua noted that the BC Provincial Government is encouraging all mandated committees to focus on what is most relevant to their communities and, as such, not all communities will have a transportation representative on their committee. She encouraged the Committee to focus on what the draft accessibility plan is already addressing.

Ms. Pasqua posed the following questions to Committee members and received the following responses:

What is the role of the Accessibility Advisory Committee?

- The Committee should advocate for accessibility, including that around active transportation;
- Committee members could support the City and provide information to the Committee from their lived experiences;
- Provide input for projects and strategies moving forward, possibly in conjunction with the New Westminster Design Panel and other city committees;
- The Committee's Terms of Reference notes that the Committee is to "consult" and we need to define what that means. Our efforts should be collaborative;
- Would like to see the Committee's "voice" come through the accessibility plan rather than just providing our opinion and that staff follow the Committee's direction and not just take things into consideration;
- Staff are transparent and open and the responsibility should be taken off of their shoulders and placed with the Committee throughout the plan;
- In terms of first steps, implementation meets a lots of chokeholds;

- If we do not recognize the importance of intentionality and universal design in terms of accessibility, then everything else looks like accommodation and after-the-fact adapting;
- The City needs to re-orientate to a disability lens. It's been a struggle to get on track with that; and
- Universal Design was skipped over in the presentation and that should be part of everyone's framework when considering any kind of plan.

Ms. Pasqua noted that this is the Committee's opportunity to create a plan that is meaningful for this group, and that there should be a leadership position in the community and on staff to ensure that the plan is successful.

What are your top priorities for the next 2 years of an accessibility plan?

- To recognize the invisible disability of poverty and provide accessibility through affordability. The cost to access healthcare programs such as swimming should be 25 percent instead of 50 percent. The Provincial Wage Enhancement could indicate what someone is receiving and that subsidy could be linked to recreation services, residential parking permits, etc., however, the challenge of that is recognized;
- Regarding parking, ideally the City would model after Portland, Oregon, where they have two types of colour coded placards and those with low income do not have to pay for parking. As well, the City of Victoria has a scratch card for \$4.50 that allows people to park in a City stall all day;
- Cities, in general, have their disability work done by staff that care about it and sometimes with the work being done as an "access" but without a capital program to ensure that all we have is fully accessible;
- There needs to be a mandate that empowers staff to get the work done and there must be discussions about resources to further this work to be new and better than what is already being done;
- We access a lot of grants but that funding should be in the City's budget to allow staff to get things done;
- There is not enough lived experience in discussions. Ableism is usually accidental;

- People must be taught to think consciously about access, and we need guidelines that are kept up to date including who at the City to talk to about this work and the implementation of it;
- The Committee should be included in the discussions of projects at the planning stage, not after the design has been made;
- The City could commitment to only using designers that have people with disabilities as a part of their team. That would also help employ those with disabilities;
- The low-hanging fruit model needs to go as it takes away from our real needs;
- Universal design, which is an opportunity for creativity, must to be used at every approach so that things do not have to constantly be adapted and redone;
- Colleges could offer courses to planners, designers, and builders around accessibility and universal design;
- Years ago, Mayor and Council would spend a day using wheelchairs and blindfolds so that they could experience what it is like to live at a disadvantage. It would be beneficial City staff do the same thing;
- Invisible disabilities need to be acknowledged and addressed;
- The community should be educated on how to recognize and assist fragile seniors, including during times such as snow events which saw a lot of seniors housebound;
- The City should not sanction public events, such as the Farmer's Market, unless accessibility is addressed including ensuring that there is available parking nearby and that there are seats and places for people to rest;
- We have to change how we see accessibility as we usually only consider those with visible and larger disabilities; and
- Many seniors will not patronize the Anvil Centre Theatre because there are no handrails in the theatre which essentially excludes them from patronizing the venue.

Ms. Pasqua left the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1 Terminology

Karla Olson, Committee Member, noted that terminology was discussed at the September 27, 2023 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee regarding people who use wheelchairs and other mobility aids. She advised

that the accessibility plan should include a list of terms that the Committee is using, for example, wheel chair users or people who use wheel chairs. The list could be created for the accessibility plan and also as a style guide that can be used throughout the City. She noted that, initially, the word “disability” was not used on the City’s new accessibility webpage and suggested that instead of using no terminology at all, that the city use person first / identity first language and that each section of any important report or document begin with “our Chair has recognized that people living with invisible and visible disabilities need to be addressed.” The recommended practice is to alternate terms to include everyone in our community who have different ways to identify which is better than to not say anything at all. This should be used in our accessibility plan and on the webpage. Ms. Olson suggested that a motion be created to facilitate the implementation of this terminology and acknowledgement of both invisible and visible disabilities.

Hailey Finnigan, Communications Coordinator, advised that since this was discussed last, the webpage has been updated to include the phrase “people with disabilities.”

Karen Basran, Human Resources Business Partner noted that part of what we are developing this plan for is to be able to come up with appropriate terminology and phrases to be used and built upon and shared with other staff. She acknowledged that it will evolve over time.

Councillor McEvoy advised that this topic would be added to the agenda for the next meeting of the Committee to allow people time to do some research and contemplation of the topic, and that a motion could be worked on in the meantime.

A committee member noted that terminology needs to be kept simple for those with cognitive challenges and that the City tends to use a lot of “city speak” which should be avoided.

6.2 Letters of Support for New Westminster Police Department Local Community Accessibility Grant Applications

Karla Olson, Committee Member, reminded members of the requested letters of support for the New Westminster Police Department to apply for two Local Community Accessibility Grants (Grant). One of which is for a feasibility study to replace the lift at one of the entrances to the Police station. She advised that, currently, the entrance segregates people and that segregation of entranceways has an historical significance of

discrimination against groups of people. She noted that the message from this is that it is an “after the fact” fix and that the stairs are still challenging and, as such, she suggest that consideration be given to having the whole entrance re-assessed so that it can be redone to remove the separate entrance. She stated that fixing only the lift would be sending the wrong message.

In response to Ms. Olson’s request, Hailey Finnigan, Communications Coordinator, advised that adding additional work may exceed the amount of money that can be accessed through the Grant and is unsure what that would mean for the letter of support.

Councillor McEvoy advised that this would be left with Ms. Finnigan and that he would speak with staff as to how the Police Board could be brought into the discussion that is being had with Council regarding accessibility.

Ms. Finnigan noted that the request is for someone who specializes in elevators to assess updating the elevator and that including assessments for other upgrades would require the services of an architect.

It was noted that the applications were due to be submitted by the end of March.

A committee member voiced agreement with Ms. Olson’s perspective on the entrance, but noted that the current lift is 30 or 40 years old and must be replaced because if it breaks down, those who cannot use the stairs will have not access to the Police Department at all.

7. **END OF MEETING**

The meeting ended at 7:48 p.m.

8. **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

To be determined.

Certified correct,

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk