



**Accessibility Advisory Committee**

**MINUTES**

**Wednesday, March 27, 2024, 5:30 p.m.**

**Open to public attendance in Committee Room G**

**Lower Level, City Hall**

**Committee members may attend electronically**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor Tasha Henderson	Chair
Karen Basran	Human Resources Business Partner
Julie Drew	Committee Member
Hazel Fitzpatrick*	Committee Member
Nancy Kato	Committee Member
Asifa Lalji*	Committee Member
Vic Leach	Committee Member
Katie Marshall	Committee Member
Karla Olson	Committee Member
Julia Schoennagel	Committee Member
Colleen Vogler	Committee Member

**REGRETS:**

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	Chair
Anne Bélanger	Committee Member

**GUEST:**

Karin Pasqua	Meaningful Access
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**STAFF PRESENT:**

Tobi May	Senior Manager, Civic Buildings & Properties
Hailey Finnigan	Communications Coordinator, Office of the CAO
Anur Mehdic	Social Planner
Carilyn Cook	Committee Clerk, Legislative Services

\*Denotes electronic attendance

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

*Councillor Henderson opened the meeting at 5:33 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.

**3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA – to add to new business**

Procedural note: Item 5.1 Committee Orientation and Affirmation of Office was addressed first.

The following items were added to the agenda by Karla Olson, Committee Member:

- Item 7.1 – Accessible Parking Spots Policy; and
- Item 7.2 – City Communication with the Disabled Community

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** the March 27, 2024 agenda of the Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted as amended.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**4.1 January 24, 2024**

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** the January 24, 2024 Minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted with the following amendments:

1. Page 4, bullet point 3, under top priorities question: comment should say "...work being done in "excess" of duties";
2. Page 4, bullet point 6, add the definition for the word "ableism" and that it is "...prejudice either intentionally or unintentionally";
3. Page 5, bullet point 7, should say "... using blindfolds, wheelchairs and other mobility aids..."; and
4. Page 6 – first paragraph, add an example for person first / identity first.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

## 5. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

### 5.1 Committee Orientation and Affirmation of Office

#### a. Orientation Presentation

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, commenced with her presentation which included the role of advisory committees, the terms of reference, meeting attendance and quorum, meeting conduct, City policies and freedom of information, and, lastly, affirmations of office.

#### b. Election of Alternate Chair

MOVED AND SECONDED

**THAT** Julie Drew be elected as the Alternate Chair for the Accessibility Advisory Committee for the 2024 Committee year.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

### 5.2 Draft Accessibility Plan

Karin Pasqua of Meaningful Access introduced herself and shared a PowerPoint presentation that provided an overview of the City of New Westminster's draft Accessibility Plan (the "Plan").

Another round of introductions took place during which members shared whether or not their needs were being met.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Pasqua, Karen Basran, Human Resources Business Partner, and Councillor Henderson provided the following comments:

- Bus stops, in particular floating bus stops, that are not user-friendly for those that are sight impaired are being looked at by the Provincial Government;
- The list under "Work Being Done" is a highlight of some of the work that is already being done and is not a complete list nor is it organized in any particular way; however, it can be reorganized into a more reader-friendly way such as alphabetically or in categories;
- There is a whole section that shares the City's accessibility story and purpose;
- Part of the goal of the recommendations is to have one central document for the City's accessibility planning for greater

accountability and a greater ability to knowledge share, which this Committee can take a leadership role in;

- The Committee can be a part of conversations around accessibility to ensure alignment amongst projects;
- The Plan is unique in many respects as it includes every department, reflects on what is being done in the Police Department and the Library and will bridge gaps that may come up;
- Prioritizing or categorizing high-cost items and less costly items, that can be implemented faster, is a city operational question. Each department will consider and integrate accessibility as they move forward with updates, modifications, new processes, etc., and determine how things get prioritized operationally for them, with the understanding that this Committee is here to consult on that process;
- A matrix of the recommendations will be created for staff to work through to prioritize items and determine what budget allocations are needed per line item;
- There are process timelines and many other cities have already shared their accessibility plans;
- This is a living document that we will continue to improve and change; however, right now we want to agree on the foundational pieces to take forward and build upon;
- Once the Committee has approved the draft, it will go to the Senior Management Team for their feedback and then to Council who will also have feedback to be incorporated into the Plan; and
- Changes made to the draft Plan by the Senior Management Team will be brought back to the Committee.

Discussion ensued regarding the lengthy time it would take to discuss each recommendation individually, and it was determined that Ms. Pasqua would review the overall intention of each of the focus areas and that the Committee would continue to provide comments during the meeting and still have the opportunity to provide additional comments after the meeting.

*Procedural note: The Committee took a break from 7:06 p.m. to 7:10 p.m.*

Councillor Henderson advised that, from a Council perspective, it is helpful to know the priorities of the Committee and the residents and of funding opportunities and how equity and climate action framework can be applied to accessibility work.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- Some of this will be thought provoking so we need to be assured that this is a living document that will be updated as the Committee takes time to work through it;
- The Plan is very comprehensive and easy to read; and
- It is concerning that this seems to be more of a laundry list than a work plan and if these items are not seen as priorities they will continue to be dropped for “fun” projects that get attention rather than what may be requested by the Committee.

Committee members were reminded that they could continue to provide their comments on the Plan after the meeting with Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, who would compile the comments and share them with Committee members and Ms. Pasqua who would then update the Plan with the feedback.

In response to Committee members’ concern that the recommendations would not be followed through with and may fall to the wayside, Councillor Henderson assured members that Council is committed to furthering and improving accessibility in the City. She also advised that items go to Council either through a Monday afternoon workshop or an evening Council meeting, and that these meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for members of the public to address Council on open delegation nights.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- Lived experiences may be missed, for example regarding employment, it states that “We are happy to provide accommodations...” This is not about being “happy to” it is a requirement. Also, most people with disabilities do not know what accommodations they can get and this is not acknowledged. The onus should not be on the person with disabilities to know what accommodations there are; and
- We need to determine how to support some of the items, while continuing to work on ones that are not to our satisfaction; and
- Mental health challenges must be included in the overall umbrella of disabilities as they can affect someone’s employment and treatment among other things and result in stigmatization.

In response of a comment from a Committee member, Karen Basran, Human Resources Business Partner, confirmed that the Committee would be ensuring the implementation and completion of the recommendations contained in the Plan, including revisions and updates when required.

**THAT** the Accessibility Advisory Committee endorse the draft Accessibility Plan in principle, with consideration of the feedback and comments provided to the consultant by the Committee and received after this evening's meeting;

**THAT** the draft Accessibility Plan come back to the Committee after feedback is received by staff from the City's Senior Management Team; and

**THAT** it is understood that this is a living document and will be amended where needed on an ongoing basis.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Councillor Henderson announced that due to the late time, the remaining agenda items would be moved to the agenda for the next meeting.

**6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**6.1 Terminology**

Moved to the next meeting.

**7. NEW BUSINESS**

**7.1 Accessible Parking Spots Policy**

Moved to the next meeting.

**7.2 City Communication with the Disabled Community**

Moved to the next meeting.

**8. END OF MEETING**

The meeting ended at 7:55 p.m.

**9. UPCOMING MEETINGS**

May 22, 2024

July 24, 2024

September 25, 2024

November 27, 2024

Certified correct,

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Councillor Tasha Henderson

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Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk

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