



**Accessibility Advisory Committee**

**MINUTES**

**Wednesday, May 22, 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
Katie Marshall	Committee Member
Karla Olson	Committee Member
Julia Schoennagel	Committee Member
Colleen Vogler	Committee Member

**REGRETS:**

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	Chair
Vic Leach	Committee Member
Anne Bélanger	Committee Member

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Corrine Garrett	Senior Manager, Recreation Facilities & Programs
Mike Anderson	Manager, Transportation
Christopher Koth*	Manager of Programs and Community Development Library
Erica Mark	Recreation Services and Facilities Manager
Hailey Finnigan*	Communications Coordinator, Office of the CAO
Erica Mark	Recreation Services and Facilities Manager Parks and Recreation
Carilyn Cook	Committee Clerk, Legislative Services

**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**

MOVED and SECONDED

**THAT** the Agenda of the May 22, 2024 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted as circulated.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

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

None.

**5. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

**5.1 Draft Accessibility Plan Update**

Karen Basran, Human Resources Business Partner, thanked members for the feedback they had provided thus far on the Organization Accessibility Plan (Plan). She noted that the City's Senior Management Team (SMT) is now reviewing it with their teams and it is anticipated that an updated version will be provided to the Committee for the July meeting, once all feedback has been received from the SMT and revisions to the document have been made by the consultant.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Basran provided the following comments:

- Committee members can still email their suggested amendments to the Plan to Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, who will pass them on to the consultant;
- The goal is to have the Plan done by September so that it can go to Council;
- Regarding the feedback mechanism, we already have an email address and, in addition to a community engagement plan, other

ways to provide feedback may come with the revamping of the City's website; and

- A new Organization Accessibility Plan will be put out every three years with consideration of what is working and what is not.

Councillor Henderson shared that the engagement done around any of the City's plans is done by the Community Engagement Department and each plan has its own actions for which consideration of inclusiveness and accessibility can be made and this will be tied back to the Organization Accessibility Plan. She noted that staff often go to committees for feedback as part of the engagement and reach out to the community in other ways as well.

## **5.2 Parks and Recreation Plan**

Corrinne Garrett, Senior Manager, Recreation Facilities and Programs, provided a presentation titled, People Parks, and Play! New Westminster Parks and Recreation Plan Update."

At the end of the presentation, Committee members were asked the following questions:

*From the perspective of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, what do you think about the following for parks and recreation in New Westminster:*

- *Strengths – what is working well?*
- *Challenges – what are the barriers and gaps?*
- *Vision – what should the vision of the plan include?*
- *Ideas – what specific ideas should be considered in the plan?*

In response, Committee members shared the following comments:

### *Strengths*

- The Activity Guide has different sections and represents a variety of community members at a various life stages;
- The online monthly calendar is great; however, it is hard to find as navigating the website is challenging;
- The City is doing a good job in consulting and trying to be inclusive;
- Appreciate receiving notices in my mail and on CityPage of what is happening in the City so I do not miss things. It is nice to be made aware of events, etc., in multiple ways;
- The City offers a lot for all of the different groups that live here;
- City parks are diverse;

- The increase in drop-in activities is good as it allows people to participate without having to commit; and
- This Committee is really seeing that the City moves in the right direction.

### Challenges

- There is no pool in Queensborough and it is a long commute to get to the pool on the mainland;
- Inclusion and accessibility are getting muddled together and they are not the same thing;
- The font on the signage for the accessible shower room is small which may lead those without disabilities to see it as a guideline or suggestion rather than the specific designation of the space;
- Park benches at places such as Pier Park are always all taken up on sunny days leaving no resting spots for those with disabilities;
- There is no place to park at Moody Park for those with disabilities who want to attend events at the Park;
- Parking in the accessibility spot at Queen's Park, near where the petting zoo was located, is very challenging due to the hill by the washrooms;
- Queen's Park does not have accessible picnic tables;
- Parking in the accessible spots at Queen's Park and trying to access the bandshell is very challenging due to the terrain;
- The implementation of bike lanes is making the City less accessible as they take away parking spots;
- Westminster Pier Park is very inaccessible with the constant disrepair of the elevator due to vandalism or mechanical issues and the lack of or unusable accessible parking which are not useful to those using a wheelchair or other mobility device;
- Most pay parking spaces require payment by credit card which is something that many people do not have;
- The elevator in City Hall is very small and the button panel is on the left side of the elevator when you walk in which is inaccessible for those in wheelchairs if they do not back into the elevator;
- The Massey Theatre is inaccessible for those with disabilities;
- Many people will not go to the Anvil Centre Theatre as it does not have handrails on the stairs to the seats;
- There are few accessible parking spots at Century House and when renovations were being done, they were used to store gravel;

- It is difficult to sign up for some programs, especially if you are not online, and some participants will monopolize programs which are then attended by the same people over and over;
- Additional and shaded benches are needed along the Millenium Trail as the current and only bench is in the full sun; and
- The discontinuation of the printed Record newspaper has resulted in people missing out on events and other information, particularly seniors who do not use computers.

Karla Olson, Committee member, spoke about a poster that she submitted and which was included in the agenda package regarding accessibility provisions being implemented in the City of Victoria for the Victoria Day Parade. She noted that this would be a good example for the City to follow for events such as the Hyack Parade and Festival as well as allowing for people with disabilities to reserve spots so that they can more easily attend events. Councillor Henderson advised that this would be great information to share with the Hyack Organization.

#### Vision / Ideas

- The City should have as many community gardens as possible since so many residents live in apartments;
- Queensborough residents would like a pool and basketball courts;
- Implement Universal Design at the beginning of projects and make what is existing, as accessible as possible;
- Universal Design benefits people in ways that they may not know and it adds to creativity as it makes us look things as not an afterthought;
- It would be beneficial for staff to have a workshop on Universal Design;
- Parks and Recreation must prioritize those with disabilities and seniors;
- Provision of accessible parking at all city parks;
- Provide opportunities for those at different stages in life or with different challenges to learn, play, or try out a new sport but who find that the current offerings are too fast paced;
- Accessibility for children who use wheelchairs in all parks, including swings;
- SPARC and HandyDART cards could be used for identification to access programs;

- Prioritize seating / rest spots throughout the City;
- Walking trails within the City should be better advertised and include information about the accessibility aspects of each trail to allow people to plan their excursion;
- The electrical bills and other printed materials could be used to share information as not everyone goes online;
- Implementation of priority seating for those with disabilities at the Moody Park outdoor pool would stop people from “reserving” seats while they spend their whole day in the pool and not using the seats;
- Parks and Recreation could offer special drop-in rates for seniors and those with disabilities;
- The 50% parks and recreation subsidy that the City offers to help lower-income people is good; however, a second subsidy level of 25% would be great as it would help those with disabilities who are on a low income and may also assist others in the community such as youth in crisis and those living in shelters who have little access to funds; and
- The process to get the parks and recreation subsidy should be streamlined and barriers removed such as the requirement to have a form signed rather than just being allowed to provide a document from the Ministry confirming that you are receiving benefits.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Garrett provided the following comments:

- Staff have been discussing how to make program registration easier and more accessible, including implementing phone trees or call lines so that people do not have to call a specific facility to register;
- Regarding the parks and recreation subsidy offered, a review of the financial access plan could take place to examine models used by other municipalities;
- The parking aspect of the City’s recreational facilities is managed in conjunction with the Engineering Department and city bylaws. If a bylaw review or revision is needed, that request could come by a recommendation from the Accessibility Advisory Committee;
- This Plan will guide the City’s work for the next 10 or 15 years;
- Universal Design was used for the design of the new facility;
- The last Plan was created in 2008 and over 80% of the priority items were achieved; and

- Residents are always given priority when program registration opens up.

### **5.3 Tour of təməsewtx<sup>w</sup> Aquatic and Community Centre (Upcoming)**

Corrinne Garrett, Senior Manager, Recreation Facilities and Programs, invited Committee members to tour the təməsewtx<sup>w</sup> Aquatic and Community Centre on a Monday or Tuesday evening after 6:00 p.m. Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, will poll members to determine the best day for everyone.

Erica Mark, Recreation Services and Facilities Manager, shared that a pop up event would be held during Seniors' Week at Century House on June 5<sup>th</sup> between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to receive additional feedback on the Parks and Recreation Plan.

Ms. Garrett left the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

## **6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

### **6.1 Terminology**

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, shared the definition of the words "disability" and "barrier" from the Accessible British Columbia Act on screen and Councillor Henderson read them aloud to the Committee as follows:

**Disability:** Disability means an inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment and a barrier.

**Barrier:** Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment. For certainty and without limiting, barriers can be caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications or technologies and affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

Karla Olson, Committee member, shared that she wished to start the conversation regarding terminology and the Act's definition of disability, noting that there are other definitions of disability and that she was not comfortable with the Act's definition. She encouraged Committee members to share their thoughts and experiences around the definition of disability as the Committee is to provide guidelines and terminology to lead the Organization Accessibility Plan, noting that the discussion could begin with the terms that we identify with, terminology we would like to see incorporated in the City's communication style guide, and how to identify those living with invisible disabilities.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- Under “Barriers” there should be a section that addresses stigma, particularly regarding mental illness;
- There are many different levels of barriers and disabilities that need to be very thoughtfully considered;
- The part regarding the inability to participate fully in society is alright; however, it is not necessarily the result of an interaction with an impairment or between an impairment and a barrier as that is too specific because the inability to participate may be due to a number of reasons. There are many layers to this;
- It seems to indicate someone who has conditions that can have barriers removed such as someone who is hearing impaired but can use hearing aids whereas some conditions cannot be changed nor accommodated;
- Privilege is a challenge in the disabled community as some can overcome and access society and some cannot;
- The previous Access Ability Advisory Committee discussed disabled parking spots and whether or not they should be called “accessible” parking spots instead. For some people that may be appropriate but for others there may times when they need to identify as disabled; and
- The Committee should consider if a guideline could be created around use of the terms “disabled” and “disability.”

Councillor Henderson acknowledged the nuances that come with the terminology used and suggested that Committee members take some time after the meeting to look up definitions and think about what feels comfortable for them. She noted that the Committee would have a more fulsome discussion on this topic at a future meeting.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- This could be a difficult discussion as someone may use a term that they are comfortable with but others are not, causing unintended offense;
- The educational piece around terminology may be challenging as we do not want people to feel excluded nor ashamed for using incorrect terminology; and



- This should be considered through a human rights lens.

## 6.2 Accessible Parking Spots Policy

Karla Olson, Committee member, reminded Committee members of the previous request for information on the updated Accessible Parking Spot Policy. She stated that in 2017, during a meeting of the previous committee, the Access Ability Advisory Committee, staff advised that they were using the American Disability Standards which allows for facilities with 26 to 50 parking stalls to have a minimum of two accessible stalls. She advised that this is now very out of date considering the increase in population since 2017, including the increase in senior residents, and that, as per the Provincial Government, approximately 20% of the population between the ages of 15 and 64 are dealing with one or more disabilities. She stressed the importance having accessible parking that reflects the reality of the current situation in New Westminster.

Councillor Henderson shared that 16% of the population in New Westminster are seniors, based on 2021 figures.

In response, Mike Anderson, Manger, Transportation, shared the following information:

- Off-street parking requirements are set in the Zoning Bylaw and are dependent on the use of the property. For instance, multi-family units require one stall for one to 15 dwelling units, two stalls for 16 to 39 dwelling units, three stalls for 40 to 69 dwelling units, four stalls for 70 to 100 dwelling units, and one additional off-street accessible parking space for every 30 dwelling units in excess of 100;
- Off-street parking refers to anything that is not on a city street such as underground parking, parkades, etc.;
- Accessible parking spaces are marked with signposts stating that they are designated accessible parking spaces; and
- For every development the developer has to follow the Zoning Bylaw as it pertains to parking.

Ms. Olson clarified that the concern was more about accessible public parking and cited Agnes Street as an example of where there is on-street parking but not enough accessible parking spots to accommodate those who require it. She requested that, as the Zoning Bylaw is currently being amended, it come to the Committee for feedback and queried why it had not already come to the Committee.

Councillor Henderson clarified that the Province has new legislation around housing that impacts parking for residents and that it is not something that is driven by staff nor that the City has control over. She noted that the City now has transit-oriented areas where there would still be requirements for accessible parking stalls; however, the requirement for regular stalls for residents would be significantly decreased in these areas.

In response to a question from a Committee member regarding who is responsible for getting private property owners, such as Royal City Centre, to increase the number of accessible stalls in their parking area, Mr. Anderson advised that the number of accessible parking spots would have been based on the requirements at the time that the mall was built and noted that the City cannot now require them to increase the number of accessible parking spots as it is private property.

Councillor Henderson advised that as citizens, members could share their need for additional accessible parking spaces with the owners of Royal City Centre.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- There is now reduced parking across the road from the Royal City Centre, which occurred when the road was widened;
- In many respects the City is becoming less and less accessible for some people;
- New Westminster is one of the few cities that charges for handicapped designated parking as most other municipalities offer free parking if you have a SPARC card or other appropriate identification displayed in your vehicle; and
- The City of Victoria offers day passes and the City of Vancouver allows non-residents with SPARC passes to park in residential areas.

Ms. Olson requested that parking-related revisions to the Zoning Bylaw be presented to the Committee for feedback and reminded the Committee of her suggestion to enter a pilot project with SPARC where there would be two differently coloured SPARC cards, including one for those with low income.

Councillor Henderson acknowledged that parking is a very real barrier that many Committee members face and shared that she would like to also include in the conversation those that do not take transit and who do not

have access to a vehicle and are unable to pay for a taxi to ensure a balance between those that can drive and those that are unable to drive. She reminded members that there is some Provincial legislation regarding zoning that the City cannot change.

In response to a question from a Committee member regarding the Zoning Bylaw amendment, Mr. Anderson advised that the amendment is being driven by Provincial legislation that is being imposed on municipalities and that currently, accessible parking is tied to the number of parking spots that are being provided. The Province has legislated that near transit, the City can no longer require parking which means that under the current Zoning Bylaw, if parking is not provided, then no accessible parking is provided either. Staff are amending the Zoning Bylaw to still require accessible parking but that it is tied to the number of residential dwelling units rather than to the number of parking spots. He noted that there are always opportunities to amend bylaws.

Councillor Henderson shared that parking will still be provided for residents in the developments in transit-oriented zones, although decreased.

### **6.3 City Communication with the Disabled**

Discussed earlier.

### **6.4 City Event Accessibility**

Discussed earlier.

## **7. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

## **8. END OF MEETING**

The meeting ended at 7:45 p.m.

## **9. UPCOMING MEETINGS**

July 24, 2024

September 25, 2024

November 27, 2024

Certified correct,

DRAFT