

ACCESSIBILITY WORKING GROUP MINUTES

Monday, March 5, 2018

1. Roll Call:

Present: As of 4:00 - Linda Bartram, Susan Gallagher, Chris Marks, Chris Dobbie and (Interpreters: Keith Brougham, Mary Butterfield), as of 4:10 Robin Bayley (via Skype w. no visual of the room), along with Paul Jones and Steve Bertrand

Councillors: Councillor Jeremy Loveday (arrived at 5:00)

Staff: Brad Dellebuur (4:05)

Regrets: Councillor Thornton-Joe

2. Approval of March 5, 2018 Agenda:

As there was quorum at 4:00 and the agenda was tight Linda decided to proceed with the adoption of the agenda moved by Linda, seconded by Susan, carried

3. Approval of February 5, 2018 Minutes:

Moved by Linda, seconded by Chris D, carried

Robin was connected to the meeting via skype (audio only) at 4:10 pm. She asked that the minutes reflect the unsatisfactory situation having been connected late and with no visual of the room.

4. Balancing Pollinator Habitat & Allergy Reduced Plantings – *initial conversation with Urban Food Table and Parks:*

Brooke Stark - Manager of Parks Operations, Leigh Campbell - Manager of Parks Planning, Virginie Lavallee-Picard - Food System Coordinator, Parks Department.

Kathryn Pankowski – James Bay Gardening Advocate

Lora Morandin – Pollinator Partnership Canada

Jessie Rucker– North Park Neighbourhood Association, lead of new pollinator community garden to be built at Franklin Green

Excerpt from the Committee of the Whole minutes of November 2, 2017:

“Committee considered a motion referred from the October 31, 2017, Special Budget Meeting regarding **plantings in proximity to playgrounds**.

Recommendations from the Accessibility Working Group to consider low pollen planting around playgrounds in consideration of children with severe allergies.

It was moved that Council direct staff to work with the Accessibility Working Group and Urban Food Table and report back in the context of the Parks Master Plan Implementation update on options for balancing accessibility considerations with pollinator habitat, including in the vicinity of playgrounds.

The AWG thanked everyone for getting together to discuss and have a conversation.

Robin discussed:

AWG mandate is to identify barriers and make recommendations for their removal. Allergies and asthma can be a disability under Human Rights legislation. A disability as an impediment to

one of life's major functions. 12 % of children have asthma, and a major trigger of attacks is high pollen levels. Other allergen factors: plants that attract stinging insects, molds that grow in mulch, and plants that cause allergic reactions when touched. Suggested an approach to start by addressing plantings around playgrounds, and then the urban forest and other new plantings. A wide variety of plant options thrive in Victoria's mild climate, so the City has the option of choosing those which are less allergenic in any given application.

The Urban Food Table is an advisory group to the City for all things related to urban food production, Virginia is the staff liaison.

Kathryn asked if the AWG has done research as to which plants cause allergic reactions.

Robin has shared a variety of reference material with the Parks Department through Brad, including "The Allergy Fighting Garden" a book by Tom Ogren and an important source. It includes the OPALS allergy scale rating for most plant families and explains what is being done elsewhere by other local governments.

The most allergenic plants in terms of pollen are not food related, but usually ornamental, but allergic risk could also come from trees that produce nuts. Within Urban Food Table sphere, she feels there is more of a need to talk about stinging insects and pollinators near playgrounds to begin with and find out which specific pollinators are being encouraged for food production to see if they sting and could cause anaphylaxis. A long term goal would be to address urban forest plantings. Robin noted that a wide variety of plants will grow in Victoria so we have the option of choosing those which are less allergenic.

Laura – researcher, has not done research on allergens of plants, the plants that need the pollinators for food production tend to have sticky not wind borne pollens, wind borne pollens are the ones that cause more allergies, most plants that would be planted to attract pollinators are not likely to be allergy offenders in terms of the pollen. Need a cross reference document identifying which plants are wanted to be used, their value for pollinators and what their qualities are regarding causing allergies. Want to attract our native bees which are much less likely to sting, are not aggressive, do not live in colonies, and if do sting, do not cause an allergic reaction (exception are bumble bees). Has never heard of anyone being allergic to any of the other native pollinators, but this does not mean it is not possible.

Virginia – definition of community gardening goes beyond food production, and also includes gardens of native plants

Robin had been surprised to learn that a pollinator garden project near playground equipment was approved in North Park while any further movement towards less allergenic plantings was on hold until these discussions took place.

Jessy – allergy and stinging insect aspect never occurred to her when planning the North Park garden, but glad to now take these into consideration. Glad to do that research. Planning a native plant garden and native herb box where there will be bees.

Robin asked if anyone in the City has responsibility for this? Is it a formal project?

Virginia stated that a community group comes to the City with a community garden proposal which is brought forward to Council for approval. Once approved, the community group is responsible for the proponents of the project.

Robin asked if the City had a policy of promoting less allergenic plantings, would the community groups be subject to that policy? Community gardens continue to be approved which might be creating a barrier to those with allergies. Where are we in regards to Council's motion?

Brooke stated that the City does not have a policy and it would depend on what was included or excluded in such a policy whether community groups would have to comply. Community garden initiatives currently come from community groups who wish to have community gardens on City land, and no City resources are allocated from a Parks operations perspective. Virginia helps groups coordinate and outlines the process. This meeting is the first step with regards to Council's motion. Parks will take the information and perspectives shared at this meeting back to Council for further direction and next steps.

Robin stated that there needs to be further conversation and/or research before reporting back to Council, because Council asked for a report *on options for balancing accessibility considerations with pollinator habitat* in City plantings in parks and near playgrounds and we haven't yet established what those options are.

Linda suggested a small group (Robin, Urban Food Table, Parks) meet again to have further discussion.

Robin identified the following actions: Urban Food Table produce a list of native pollinators they wish to encourage. Robin to share a list of the worst allergy causing plants.

Brad indicated that he would meet with Parks to determine next steps and, if further information was required, would follow up with today's discussion participants. Any further research/information/ lists that could be provided would be appreciated. Once staff think they have enough information, they will prepare a report that would be shared with the group, prior to presenting to Council.

5. Business Arising:

a) Accessible Venue for AWG Meetings:

Brad reported that no fully accessible City-owned venue had been identified and the CRD building near City Hall had been ruled out. The AWG discussed the options. Asked if City Studio's washroom is accessible or if it requires a renovation? The AWG requested that this be identified and barriers removed. Robin suggested that in addition to physical changes, policy changes may be needed to create a truly accessible meeting space and she asked whether the difficulty finding an accessible meeting space for the AWG had raised any flags within the City.

b) Accessibility Framework:

Brad reported that the City of Victoria issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for qualified consultants/consulting firms to develop an Accessibility Framework. Brad undertook to share it with the AWG members.

c) **Royal Athletic Park:**

Brad reported that Chaz says the frontage design is not moving forward in 2018, recreation is looking into expanding seating and improving sight lines for patrons with mobility challenges, facilities will be having an accessibility audit for the site, and will be discussing food allergies and signage for food runners with recreation.

Action: Brad will include Chaz's response in minutes and find out who is doing the accessibility audit.

d) **Improving Remote Access:**

The group discussed the frequent failure of and frustrations with the Skype technology, which was to be a temporary solution for providing remote access until an accessible venue could be found. Group also discussed the challenges of remote access to Council meetings.

Robin reiterated for Councillor Loveday's sake, that it was very challenging for her to lead the conversation with the Urban Food Table Group/Parks as she was not able to see reactions to her comments and know who was speaking during what would be a difficult topic under the best of conditions. There was a lot of distracting noise with people arriving late and I.T. fiddling with wires. Robin did not know what was going on and did not feel the meeting was effective.

The AWG would like to have a policy to connect those participating remotely by 3:45pm (when meeting starts at 4:00 pm). The assistance of I.T. may be required, and they would need to be regularly booked to ensure access prior to the meeting.

Action: Brad will take steps to ensure that the technology is fully operational at the start of the meeting.

e) **Clerk's draft Advisory Committees to Council Policy:**

The Clerk sent a message the day after the AWG meeting that he has not been able to find the resources needed to consult with affected advisory bodies, as per Council's direction from August 2017. As an interim measure, Councillor Isitt is working on a process to address the issue of getting AWG motions to the Council table.

f) **Accessibility Primer:**

This is going to be something that can be provided in advance to visitors to the meeting, to improve effectiveness of meetings by increasing accessibility knowledge of those who come to consult with the AWG.

Action: Steve and Paul will finalize the first draft and will send it to AWG members in the next couple of weeks.

6. Crystal Pool Update / Presentation/consultation:

Thomas Soulliere, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities, Navdeep Sidhu, Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities, Adam Fawkes, Associate Architect, HCMA Architecture + Design, Zubin Shroff, Architect, HCMA Architecture + Design
Doug Nutting, Executive Director Recreation Integration Victoria

(Also available on the [Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre Replacement Project's website](#)).

Thomas Soulliere:

1. There is still lots of time for feedback.
2. 2016 Feasibility Study to replace facility looked at:
 - a. Community needs
 - b. Practices
 - c. Regional context
 - d. Future needs
3. There were 3 options presented to Council and they chose in Feb 2017 to build a new building.
4. Flushing out project team
 - a. Project manager
 - b. Design team
 - c. Have engaged Rick Hanson Accessibility certification program as a partner

Starting process of Engagement on conceptual design which is based on principles of: barrier-free, sustainable, leading in environmental approach, focussed on inclusion, community hub, seen as a community centre. The project will go above and beyond the building code so PWD have same experience as able bodied patrons, Universal Design.

There have been 2 Open Houses and now starting engagement with stakeholder groups. Both Thomas and Adam reiterated that it is not too late for changes to be made to the design. The goal is to have a more detailed design by June 2017; anticipating that conceptual design will adjust as they gather feedback

Conceptual design: 2-storey building on same Central Park site beside existing pool (which will remain open during construction), Located at corner of Pembroke and Quadra where fitness Pod is at present. These will be relocated later when existing pool is taken down. Walk from parking (to be extended) along the front of the building (Quadra) under a generous roof overhang to front entrance near Pembroke, working on getting HandyDart and accessible parking closer to entrance.

Goal to allow as much natural light in and views of the park from within, light from above in pool and lobby, Glass looking into pool and fitness area along Quadra

Main level: level entry, large lobby and reception area, control point that leads down hallways to changing rooms, level entry on to pool deck, main 50 m pool and leisure/therapy pool (larger than existing one) both on same level with ramps into both pools, steam room, sauna, hot tub (possibly two) with ramp access

Second level: accessed by stairs or large elevator right after control point, large fitness area which is flexible and can be reconfigured, three multi-purpose rooms

The AWG raised the following concerns:

- Lack of privacy due to amount of glass - don't want to be watched when swimming or exercising, PWD need privacy so they don't become a spectacle to passers-by.

Adam explained that the design allows for fitness area to be sectioned off temporarily or for a longer period of time to address privacy concerns.

- Glass can create a lot of glare making it difficult for those with limited vision to navigate, also easy to walk into glass so needs to be made visible (decals)
- Way finding is not just about word and picture signs, it may be a detectable route under foot or changes to the floor surface to indicate a threshold to encourage as much independent travel as possible.
- That not all disability groups have been consulted especially those with less understood or known disabilities. Thomas stated that they have consulted with some to date but more consultations are to come. Doug listed those with mental health conditions, learning and cognitive disabilities, neuro-sensory, even colour blindness. Have had discussions around all disability groups.
- Robin raised the concern that those with autism or epilepsy may find that repeated stripes in décor that she has seen on-line can set off an episode if moving through such an area. Adam explained that the current on-line drawings are to give a sense of what goes where – not final look, 4 -6 months away from knowing what the materials and colours will be. They know acoustics are very important and that large echoing spaces can be disorienting to many people. Have Engaged an acoustic engineer.
- Size of change rooms. Adam explained that they are designed to be 1 ½ times larger in total change room space, gendered change/washrooms will be smaller but anyone can use the universal change/washroom area which has individual cubicles (some with showers), washrooms and an open locker area. There also washrooms in the lobby area.
- Temperature of pools – if too cold can cause spasms. Adam indicated that the lap pool will be same temp as existing pool, the leisure/therapy pool will be warmer, and there will be possibly 2 hot tubs at different temps.
- Food service and persons with allergies. There will be something between full cafeteria and vending machines, possibly vender can come in and plug into services (water, power etc.). Robin explained that food being consumed in a large open space at tables is a concern for those with food allergies. Current design has no way to access recreation facilities without passing through area where food is being consumed. Need direct access from main entrance or separate entrance. Robin assumes there will be more air replacement (ventilation) in exercise area than in the lobby. Food consumption needs to be looked at through a disability lens also. Once food is introduced into an area there is the risk that food (e.g. peanuts) residue is transferred to surfaces which need to be touched by persons with (peanut) allergies. Need to find a balance with the need for food to be consumed by those who are exercising or not able to go home to eat.

You can reduce the risk by providing hand wash stations near tables, adjacent to water fill stations, outside of washrooms. This will promote the wellness of the general population also.

Action: Robin to share other solutions for the report

- Counter height shown in conceptual drawings all appear to be regular height. Need for lower counter for those in wheelchairs.
- Type of sanitation for pool - urine combined with chlorine produces a gas particularly harmful to those with asthma. Adam explained that every pool requires some chlorine. There will also be UV filters to reduce the amount of chlorine needed. To deal with chloramines that gather on the pool surface, there will be air flowing over the pool surface to take away harmful gases (system has really improved in recent years). Robin suggested having direct convenient access

to washrooms from pool to encourage use. She urged that all measures that are available to reduce the need for chlorine be considered.

Action: AWG members to provide additional feedback/info/concerns/solutions to staff. Staff will set up another consultation/workshop if required.

AWG needs to be kept in the loop through the various stages as more detailed design features, fittings, policies are being considered as there are accessibility considerations at every stage.

Brad reiterated – closing the loop, everything discussed may not be incorporated into design but AWG needs to know the sentiment was heard, taken into consideration and if is not to be incorporated then an explanation as to why not. Thomas said they could commit to this and come back to a future AWG meeting.

Action: AWG members to complete on-line survey

7. New Business:

On-street accessible parking:

Linda has been approached by the VDRC regarding some changes being proposed by the City to on-street accessible parking spaces. VDRC representatives will be at the April meeting to discuss their concerns.

Action: Brad to invite Ismo to also attend.

8. Next meeting – April 9, 2018

9. Adjournment – 6:03 p.m.