

Accessibility Working Group Minutes

November 2, 2020

1. Welcome and Introductions:

AWG Members: Linda Bartram (Chair), Robin Bayley, Susan Gallagher, Steve Bertrand, Paul Jones, Chris Marks. Regrets: Chris Dobbie.

Council Liaisons: Jeremy Loveday, Sarah Potts

Staff: Kelly-Anne Malcomson, Derrick Newman (Parks, Rec & Facilities), Nav Sidhu (Parks, Rec & Facilities), Sarah Webb (Engineering & Public Works), Christine Havelka (Legislative Services), Mandi Sandhu (Corporate Initiatives),

Guests: Mark Miller, Wendy Cox, David Willows, Christine Paisley, Regan Shrumm, Elizabeth Monk, Buvani Sunderam

ASL interpreter: Rachel Murray

Linda explained that this is the final AWG meeting as Council approved the Accessibility Framework on October 8, 2020 and the AWG's mandate was to expire one month after its adoption, November 8, 2020.

2. Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved as circulated: moved by Linda, seconded by Paul, carried

3. Approval of July 28, 2020 minutes

The minutes were approved by email in August and again in person at this meeting. Moved by Linda, seconded by Robin, carried

4. Staff updates

a) accessibility staff position

Mandi shared a slide presentation. She was reminded that such presentations need to be shared in an accessible format 4 days in advance of the meeting and as these slides were not provided in advance, she would have to read and/or explain their content to those who could not see the screen.

Mandi reported that in August Council authorized the hiring of two staff and in September the job descriptions were finalized. They are currently sitting with the

union for review as of October 26. The union has 30 days to respond after which the City will proceed to posting the positions in December, with the on-boarding of staff by February 2021.

Robin pointed out that there seems to be some discrepancy between Council's direction on August 6, 2020; the hiring of a dedicated accessibility position,

"That Council authorize funding to hire an Accessibility Coordinator within the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office, with appropriate expertise and sufficient authority within the organization to effectively advance Accessibility in City infrastructure, facilities, programs and operations."

and what staff are planning to do; hire an individual with accessibility and other equity (Trans Inclusion Plan implementation) responsibilities. Mandi gave the rationale at a previous meeting that staff did not feel there was enough accessibility work to justify a dedicated accessibility position. AWG disagrees given the hundreds of hours the AWG and staff have been required to put into accessibility work to date and there is much more to be done, including awareness within the Equity Department itself.

Councillor Loveday stated that staff's plan was not exactly what he had anticipated but staff did report this direction to Council on October 1 and Council did not change the direction in which staff were proceeding.

b) Recruitment of the new Accessibility Advisory Committee

This will be launched on November 3 and will be run for three weeks. It will be disseminated and promoted by social media, the City website, a public service announcement, print ads in the newspaper, stakeholder distribution lists and promotion by individuals on today's call. Applicants are required to complete a 2-page application form which will be provided to Council to make an in-camera decision, hopefully on December 10 with the committee named by mid December and orientation in January 2021.

Robin asked what specialized promotion will be undertaken to ensure that persons with alternate information needs, will hear about the opportunity. Mandi asked what these might be, and it was suggested that she refer to the results of the survey conducted a few years ago where respondents were asked how they wished to receive information. Engagement have put together the communication plan and should have this information also.

Robin also raised the flag that in order to form a balanced committee, the applicants will be required to provide sensitive and private information with regards to their "lived" experience of disability and that the application should

assure applicants that this information will be handled sensitively and according to privacy laws. Mandi indicated that all the questions on the application form are optional and people do not need to self identify. Linda stated that identification of “lived” experience of disability needed to be mandatory or there will be no way of selecting a balanced committee, representing the breadth of disability. Steve stated that as little information as possible to achieve a balanced committee should be required.

c) Accessibility Advisory Committee Orientation

Mandi outlined the committee orientation agenda which would include:

- The Council Procedures Bylaw (AWG feedback: there are barriers within the current Council Procedure bylaws such as voting by the raising of hands which is not accessible to persons who are blind. Other barriers were shared with the clerk in June 2017 and are included over time in AWG minutes. these should be searched out by staff and included in this discussion, so the new committee does not have to start from scratch with making new staff aware.)
- roles and responsibilities of committee members, Council Liaisons and staff
- committee procedures (AWG feedback: internal procedures currently exist such as the need for materials to be provided 4 days in advance. Many of these procedures will still be applicable to the new committee. Also address accommodation needs of new committee members.)
- process to get a motion from the committee to Council
- information management using Share Point (AWG feedback: platform needs to be accessible to all members and there be no cost)
- mandate of committee and streams of work outlined in the Terms of Reference.

d) Beacon Hill Park road closures

Nav Sidhu reported that staff will be reporting back to Council at the end of November with regards to all the feedback they have received. The road closures will remain in effect until Council gives further direction after staff’s report.

e) Peter Pollen Park

Derrick Newman reported that staff will be reporting on the high-level design to Council in December. The report will include an attachment entitled Public Engagement Summary which will include AWG’s feedback. AWG’s input will be included in the next design phase which is at a more detailed level. Linda raised

the concern that it not be lost particularly if AWG (or its replacement) is not consulted at the detailed design phase.

Paul asked if AWG's concerns regarding allergenic plantings (i.e. Garry Oaks and grasses) have been shared with the indigenous project partners and were they open to considering other native plants which are less harmful to those with environmental sensitivities. Derrick stated that staff have not shared these concerns because they did not feel it was appropriate at this stage of this new partnership and they are still working out how to inform the indigenous councils of public feedback. No plantings have happened yet, and we are probably still two years away from seeing work commence. Again, specific plant types and location will be decided at the more detailed design phase. General ecological restoration is the current aspiration. The Songhees have provided some traditional maps showing the Garry Oak habitat for the Victoria region. Staff have also consulted with Cheryl Bryce, a local expert on traditional plant ecology. Staff are also mindful of the indigenous oral tradition.

Robin mentioned that paintings from the first contact era appear to depict other tree species, not just Garry Oaks. She would hope that planting decisions are based on facts and look at all historical evidence available.

Linda commented that the process of reconciliation for one equity seeking group should not create barriers for another equity seeking group and that staff and Council need to keep this in mind when making decisions. Paul raised the point that members of the indigenous community may well experience the health issues associated with certain plant species and this might be a way of introducing this concern through an intersectional lens. Derrick further explained the indigenous community's sense of great loss of their culture and identity. Linda commented that the problem is that we are hearing this through a third party, and it would be far better if the conversation could be between the two affected groups.

f) New Accessible Parking standards

A project update was circulated with the agenda. Sarah Webb reported that the objective of the project is to establish:

- new parking regulations, design requirements and supply rates within the City Zoning Bylaw for parking associated with new private developments; and
- new accessible parking design specifications for City supplied stalls on the street, in surface parking lots or in parkades.

As well as Prioritize a retrofit and expansion strategy.

Draft recommendations have been developed from stakeholder engagement and stakeholders are invited to give feedback next month on these

recommendations as well as suggestions regarding retrofits and new locations. The results will be presented to Council in January.

Robin raised a concern about signage. Sarah indicated that there will be a new standard for signage as well as for paint markings. (After the meeting a graphic of the proposed signage with text description was shared with the AWG).

Elizabeth Monk asked if the flicker rate of lighting in parkades which can trigger seizures and migraines has been considered. Sarah will look into this. Derrick reported that florescent lighting in the drive areas of parkades is being replaced with LED technology.

Sarah also confirmed that three flashing beacons will be installed on Dallas Road. These are a flashing amber light that is pedestrian activated warning drivers that they are approaching a pedestrian crosswalk.

5. Motion regarding pet restrictions at City Hall

Given that:

- Pet-friendly practices at City Hall were adopted in 2014 as part of a package of customer service innovations;
- These practices were not subject to staff accessibility analysis and scrutiny or public consultation;
- There was no written analysis of the potential negative implications of the pet-friendly stance;
- These practices are not outlined in a formal policy and thus have no rules, restrictions or guidelines for staff interaction with pets;
- these practices giving pet custodians the privilege to visit City Hall with their pets create a barrier to accessing City Hall for persons with allergies, asthma and other medical conditions for which pet dander is a trigger;
- staff created the expectation that they would report back with facts and a recommendation to Council in January 2017 and again in September 2018; and
- There are methodical issues with the Air Quality Assessment conducted at City Hall, including the fact that the standard was designed for an industrial setting such as a factory and pet allergens were measured at the time of the week they were least likely to be present.

The Accessibility Working Group recommends that Council direct staff to report back on the AWG's various recommendations to address access barriers to City Hall created by the unrestricted access of pets, recommend improvements to existing City pet guidelines and practices and formalize policies, giving due consideration to the negative accessibility and other equity implications of continuing these practices.

Moved by Paul, seconded by Steve, carried

Staff will bring this motion before Council in the next T3 Report in February 2021.

Derrick reported that they had already initiated this work during the scent reduction policy development, but it was put on hold with COVID. It should have been included in the Short-Term Action Plan or reported on in the October 1 Staff Report. Staff will hopefully give an update when the above motion is reported to Council in February.

6. Guidance for Accessibility Analysis communicated to Council through the Accessibility Impact Statement (AIS)

A document entitled Draft Guidance for Accessibility Analysis dated October 27, 2020 was drafted by AWG and circulated prior to the meeting. Linda stated that this is the type of tool AWG has been lobbying for when it speaks of an accessibility lens. Mandi stated that she “thinks the document is really good”. She is considering staff training for 2021 and how to use this tool in project Management at the concept stage, not just at the end for the Accessibility Impact Statement. She will have further discussion regarding refinement of the document with the new committee. Meeting attendees are encouraged to send additional questions, to be added to the document, to Mandi Sandhu masandhu@victoria.ca

David Willows stated that we need to humanize the language around accessibility, referring to the needs of persons with disabilities rather than accessibility needs. Staff need to think twice before writing such Statements in the AIS as “wheelchair access is encouraged”. The building code is a bare minimum, and it is expected by the National Research Council that builders will go beyond the code. It is also important to state exactly what the code covers which may not be all the elements of an endeavour (e.g. the code for housing only covers the entrance and hallways)

7. Linda thanked the AWG members, Council Liaisons and staff for all their hard work over the past five years and reminded AWG members that they can apply to serve on the new committee to provide continuity and act as a resource. Steve, Chris, Paul and Jeremy also made closing remarks.

8. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:02.