

## ACCESSIBILITY WORKING GROUP MINUTES

**Monday, November 6, 2017**

### **1. Roll Call:**

Present: Linda Bartram, Robin Bayley (via Skype), Susan Gallagher, Steve Bertrand, Chris Dobbie, Paul Jones (via speakerphone) and the interpreters

Councillor: Councillor Thornton-Joe

Staff: Fraser Work, Brad Dellebuur, Christine Brinton

Regrets: Councillor Jeremy Loveday, Chris Marks

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Linda advised the AWG that she and Brad are still trying to find a venue that is accessible for the entire working group. They will keep trying until they can find one and in the meantime AWG will continue to meet here in the Esquimalt Nation meeting room.

### **2. Motion to accept the agenda of November 6, 2017:**

Moved: Chris D.                      Seconded: Susan G.                      CARRIED

### **3. Motion to accept the minutes of October 2, 2017:**

Moved: Chris D.                      Seconded: Susan G.                      CARRIED

### **4. New Business**

#### Single Use Plastic Bag Bylaw

Background paper titled “Disability Perspectives on City of Victoria Plastic Bag Regulation” was prepared by Robin Bayley and Linda Bartram for the Accessibility Working Group on November 1, 2017 and distributed to the AWG via email on November 2, 2017.

Linda provided the following background: On May 26, 2016, Council directed staff to look into the issue of plastic bags and develop a work plan. On October 26, 2017, COTW considered a report and draft bylaw intended to significantly reduce the use of plastic bags.

Linda B. discussed the background document that was provided in response to the draft bylaw. Linda asked if the AWG had any accessibility related questions or comments. The AWG is concerned with ensuring that Council is fully briefed on accessibility

impacts. People with disabilities often do things differently, by the nature of their disability, and therefore there is almost always a different impact to persons with disabilities with any change. The backgrounder report attempts to anticipate these concerns.

From the backgrounder, the AWG discussed:

- People with allergies, sensitivities and auto-immune disorders rely on plastic bags not merely for convenience, but for protection from harmful substances purchased by others.
- Contamination of grocery checkout conveyor belts and counters from allergens and pathogens present in other customers' used and unclean reusable bags and unprotected food purchases.

Robin said that while the draft regulation does not include a ban on thin plastic bags used for produce and meat, etc., she has concerns for people with allergies from the increased public awareness about plastic and behaviour changes it may induce. For allergic people, these plastic bags are what protects their food from allergens from others' purchases and keeps them safe. She feels that more people will stop using the film bags and put food directly on grocery checkout conveyor, increasing risk of allergen transfer from the surface and clerks' hands. Robin requested a note to file so that any future amendments to the bylaw will consider the crucial role the film bags play in keeping allergic people safe.

The used bags other customers' bring in for their purchases will also contain allergens that contaminate the packing area. She asks that implementation plans include asking grocers to increase cleaning efforts in the checkout and packing areas and the importance of hand cleaning (not sanitizing).

Paul J. - these issues are a hygiene or health related concerns. Who is responsible, the consumer, the cashier, the store manager, who would police this?

Steve B. – the education piece is most important and can a retailer refuse contaminated bags? He asked that if the plastic bags are to be replaced with paper bags, to please be aware that handles on any bag are necessary for people in wheelchairs to hang items on wheelchairs.

Linda stated plastic bags from the grocery store do not have any scent and are used by people with scent related allergies as garbage bags. It is difficult to find unscented trash bags to replace these, and some people cannot bring scented ones into their homes. Also, people with mobility and vision impairments often have to rely on public transportation. If they buy large items, they may find it more difficult than other people to transport them and because of the need to spend more time outdoors, using public

transportation, they and their purchases are more subject to the weather than the general population.

Staff comments:

- There is no intent in the bylaw that would force the retailers to have to take in a bag that was donated. The retailers would be required to wash bags to the right standard. The retailer would have to have a system in place to take back bags to reuse for someone that doesn't have enough money to buy a new bag.
- Public Education will promote washing your reusable bag like you wash your clothes.
- Germs on a conveyor belt, meat packaging contaminants, etc. are concerns that already exist, despite this legislation. This may not be the right place to bring this particular issue forward as they are health regulation standards.
- Control of germs is not what this bylaw/program is trying to achieve.
- MEC sells large reusable bags for large items (such as bedding), but are likely cost prohibitive.
- Staff is considering small paper bags for cards and plastic for over-sized items and there may be more exemptions.
- Some people may wish to use garment bags for purchasing clothing.

**ACTION: Linda will produce a final written report (please reply with all concerns to Linda, ASAP) with recommendations and submit to staff to be reported to Council.**

#### **4. BUSINESS ARISING DISCUSSION:**

- a) Financial Plan – Installation of Audible Signals and Sidewalk Modifications.

Linda raised her concerns with the draft financial plan as it does not include the AWG's identified need, and subsequent motion, to address the existing list of requested audible signals in 2018. Rather, the plan is to spread these installations out over several years. Linda raised this concern during the 2016 financial plan public consultation and AWG has discussed this urgent safety concern at several meetings since its formation over two years ago. Linda was also concerned that not all requests were reflected in the financial plan and wonders if the formal requests from the James Bay Low Vision group submitted in the fall of 2016 have even been put on the City's request list.

Staff advised:

- Council asked staff to look into upgrading the remaining 54 signals in an accelerated fashion. Staff is working on this and will report back to Council.
- The 3 being done this year (2017 APS pilot) are: Gorge / Washington, Bay / Richmond and Gosworth / Hillside. Note: Gorge / Washington is the request from 2012

- Brad will reshare the list with the AWG to ensure that all submitted requests have been noted.
- Fraser advised the AWG that the City invests in all safety aspects and improvements, its how the City has to prioritize. The audible signals are a high priority.

AWG commented:

- Robin - suggested contracting a civil engineering firm to do this project and get rid of backlog.
- Linda – why not just the 8 or 9 on the request list, why do all 54 have to be considered. The AWG has indicated those on the request list are the top concerns.
- Paul – please remember roads and potholes are not his concern, pedestrians are the main concern.
- Steve – for the AWG, we all need to be understanding of the process for Council and staff.
- Susan – wanted to point out how important red paint is on curbs in helping her see where the curb is.

**ACTION: Brad will reshare the written list of requested audible signals with the AWG.**

**ACTION: Add “painting of red paint on curbs” to the December agenda.**

Brad updated the AWG on the status of the request for the sidewalk to be replaced in the bus zone in front of City Hall as it is not accessible for people in wheelchairs (on Douglas Street). Brad indicated they are looking into the dollar figure and folding it back into discussions with Council in the financial plans.

b) Crossing Over Bike Lanes from Bus Stops on Pandora

Linda has had three 3 other blind people raise concerns about this situation. They go to another bus stop several blocks away for their own safety. The City has created a barrier for these individuals and this is not acceptable.

Staff are in discussions and will bring forward a package to go to the ATAC and then will come back to AWG for further discussion.

Cyclists need to know they have to stop and communicate with visually impaired pedestrians.

**ACTION: Brad will review with staff in regarding the public education component which should include a formal outreach with GVCC, CNIB training programs and most importantly cycling groups.**

Susan advised the AWG that Chris Marks did make his contact with the cycling coalition, but had no feedback for this committee.

**Moved: Linda B.**

**Seconded: Susan G.**

*Motion: That signage be painted on the bike lane surface on either side of the marked crosswalks to the bus stops on Pandora reminding cyclists they need to stop, and if required, that the Accessibility Reserve funds be used for this project.*

**CARRIED**

c) Accessibility Impact Statements

This is to try to facilitate the accessibility impact statements that are within reports from staff going to Council. The AWG felt that Council will really benefit from a formal policy. The AWG is still seeing reports to Council that do not even include an accessibility impact.

**Moved: Robin B.**

**Seconded: Steve B.**

*Motion: The AWG recommends to Council that it direct Staff, in consultation with the AWG, to develop a policy and guidance material to implement Council's direction of January 20, 2017 that staff include Accessibility Impacts in all reports to Council.*

**CARRIED**

**ACTION: Robin will write the background to go forward with the above motion suitable to provide to staff and/or Council.**

d) Accessible Pedestrian Signals (update from Brad) – 2017 Trial Locations:

- 1 Gorge/Washington – 2012 resident request (new installation)
- 2 Bay/Richmond – upgrade existing audible pedestrian signal
- 3 Gosworth/Hillside – resident request (new installation)

e) City Hall Environmental and Allergy Related Concerns –

Councillor Loveday will discuss with the City Human Resources Department and see what policies / training are currently in place regarding Accessibility Awareness Training.

Councillor Loveday was not at the meeting, so there was no update provided.

Councillor Thornton-Joe discussed:

- The reason there is sometimes a strong scent in the building is that a spray is used for rodents.
- As far as she knows, there is no longer scented products used in washrooms in City Hall.
- Councillor Thornton-Joe has had discussions with the City manager regarding a scent free policy for the City of Victoria.

As a follow up, Robin asked if her critique of the City's existing Guideline on the use of Scented Products was reported back to Human Resources.

Although Councillor Loveday may have, Councillor Thornton-Joe did not provide comments to Human Resources.

**ACTION:** Robin – will share this document again (with her comments) to the AWG and Councillors via email.

f) Updates on the following:

- *Over-arching Policy for Advisory Committees* – Councilor Loveday – Linda spoke with Councillor Loveday and he has not yet talked to Chris Coates – Linda asked why ATAC can get new members and the AWG can not. AWG should be able to recruit new members.

**Moved: Chris D.**

**Seconded: Susan G.**

*Motion to ask Council to fully complement the number of members for AWG.*

**CARRIED**

- *Truncated Dome Pilot Project Work Plan* including start date, locations, if they are no lip curbs, and a link to best practices – additional information attached to minutes.
- *Obstruction of sidewalks on Wark Street* – Brad is looking at this in consideration of other priorities and will reach out to the resident who raised the issues.
- *Timing of pedestrian signals* at Hillside and Blanshard, Douglas and Pandora, Blanshard at Finlayson / Tolmie, add Fort and Richmond – this list has been forwarded to the operations department. Let brad know of any others.

**ACTION: AWG to email Brad with additional locations within the next few days.**

- *Statement of Commitment* – Councillors Loveday & Thornton- Joe.

**ACTION: Councillor Thornton-Joe will discuss with Councillor Loveday, possibly take to Council as an information sharing item**

- *Accessibility Survey* – Brad gave the AWG a brief update on the 25 page summary provided by Engagement.

**ACTION: Brad will provide an attachment to the minutes outlining these findings**

- *Children with Allergies and Crystal Pool activities* - Follow up re: motion to invite recreation staff and the RIV to come to a future AWG meeting to discuss accommodation of people with disabilities, including allergies, in City recreation programs. Brad indicated they have been invited to attend.

**NEW BUSINESS (Con't):**

- a) AWG review and feedback regarding the draft off-street parking regulations – staff will come to December meeting. Jim Handy will send out accessible background materials to AWG prior to the December meeting. This will be the first item on agenda then AWG will do a written report to go back to Council.

- b) Councilor Thornton-Joe would like a list – highest priority on what AWG has been recommending to Council.

**ACTION: Linda will forward the Issues List from July 2017 to Councillor Thornton-Joe.**

**5) DATE OF NEXT MEETING – December 4, 2017**

**6) ADJOURNMENT - The AWG adjourned at 5:55 pm.**

## ATTACHMENT

### Additional information following November 2017 AWG meeting

#### A. Accessible Pedestrian Signals – 2017 Trial Locations:

1. Gorge/Washington – 2012 resident request (new installation)
2. Bay/Richmond – upgrade existing audible pedestrian signal
3. Gosworth/Hillside – resident request (new installation)

#### B. Truncated Domes – Trial Locations:

1. Hillside/Shakespeare – 8 mats
2. Blanshard/Hillside – 12 mats
3. Bay/Richmond – 8 mats
4. Douglas/Hillside – 19 mats
5. Bay/Douglas – 10 mats
6. Bay/Government – 10 mats
7. Cedar Hill/North Dairy – 10 mats

The truncated dome installations will be done on a variety of wheelchair ramp conditions, including those with ‘zero’ or 10mm lips.

In addition, a trial using stainless steel ‘buttons’ replicating the pattern of the truncated dome mats will be done at the Fort/Government intersection in 2018, in coordination with curb reconstruction work being done for the Fort Street bicycle lane project at this intersection.

#### C. Accessibility Survey summary of comments:

- 77% of respondents had a disability
- Representation for all age groups was good – 6-7% for under 18 and over 75, 35% of respondents between 35-55
- 69% of respondents identified that their mobility was affected by disability, followed by energy/endurance (45%), then vision and dexterity (30%)
- Stairs, curb cuts, sidewalk condition and obstacles were the dominant barrier issues (55-56%). Access to public washrooms, entrances to

shops/businesses, and the number of accessible parking spaces were also noted (over 40%).

- 42% of respondents expressed that there were barriers to participating in public consultations (civic life/City interaction).
- Overall, 33% of respondents expressed barriers prevented access to City owned/run facilities. The following percentages are specific to each category:
  - 27% - sports fields/tennis courts (43% choose not to visit)
  - 44% - beaches (44% are able to visit and enjoy)
  - 24% - Inner Harbour (**70% are able to visit and enjoy**)
  - 34% - concerts (46% are able to visit and enjoy)
  - 6% - Greater Victoria Public Library (**74% are able to visit and enjoy**)
  - 12% - City Hall (40% are able to visit and enjoy, **48% choose not to visit**)
  - 18% - Crystal Pool (28% are able to visit and enjoy, **54% choose not to visit**)
  - 9% - Community/Senior Centres (56% are able to visit and enjoy, 35% choose not to visit)
  - 31% - McPherson and Royal Theatres (46% are able to visit and enjoy, 25% choose not to visit)
  - 19% - Save-On Foods Memorial Centre (**50% are able to visit and enjoy**, 32% choose not to visit)
  - 13% - Royal Athletic Park (32% are able to visit and enjoy, **55% choose not to visit**)
  - 13% - Victoria Conference Centre (**45% are able to visit and enjoy**, 42% choose not to visit)
  - 13% - Crystal Garden (30% are able to visit and enjoy, **60% choose not to visit**)

Most people who responded prefer having accessibility info shared with them via the City website (47%), electronic newsletter (44%), or on Facebook (40%)

70% of respondents had never raised an accessibility issue with the City of Victoria; however, 44% of those that had raised an issue rated their experience as somewhat or very dissatisfied.