Accessibility Working Group (AWG)

Consultation Report

Re: Website Accessibility

May 10, 2018

This report is the result of a consultation held on May 7, 2018, attended by two AWG members and Heather Follis, Engagement. The goal of this consultation was to address accessibility needs when it comes to website design. The two AWG members in attendance addressed website access for those with low vision and those using screen readers. The needs of those who require American Sign Language were also briefly discussed. Neither AWG member has technology expertise but they are experienced computer users who require adaptations to access websites.

Heather Follis reported that the current website was designed 8 years ago and at the time, only minimal accessibility was addressed; text resizing, high contrast and a few navigation features. It is not to W3C standards. They recognize that this is not adequate from an accessibility perspective. They are now looking at an entire website redevelopment and before they put out the RFP they want to confirm that they are putting the correct requirements in the RFP so the resulting website will be fully accessible. There is a desire to put the RFP out within the next six weeks but this time frame is open to discussion.

Engagement plans to consult with their front line staff regarding documented calls from the public who are having challenges finding information on the website. They will also consult with the public directly, perhaps through an on-line survey to determine if visitors found the information they were looking for. They also have six years of analytics (where and how folks go on the website). Parking, recreation, garbage schedules, maps and jobs are the highest accessed sections of the website. The AWG is being consulted at the very beginning of the project.

Observation: Linda has been informed that website developers may say they are experienced and know how to make a site accessible but they do not always deliver what they are claiming. They use tools to scan for accessibility but they don't really understand about the programs persons with disabilities use to access the computer such as screen readers.

Recommendation 1

The City is advised to connect with Kelby Mullin with the Victoria Disability Resource Centre (VDRC) who is overseeing the revamp of the VDRC website from an accessibility perspective. Linda will connect Heather with Kelby

Observation: Persons with disabilities who use adaptive tools to access websites are the best suited to determining whether a website is truly accessible. Persons with disabilities are too often asked to provide their expertise free of charge.

Recommendation 2

Conduct consumer testing for accessibility before the website goes live and offer persons with disabilities who test the website, some form of compensation for providing their expertise.

Observation: The City has been approached by venders wishing to sell them built-in screen readers. Most individuals who have the computer skills to access the City website and need a screen reader already have one. There is a free screen reader, NVDA, which performs quite well in most circumstances.   Linda is able to navigate the current website using JAWS and presumes NVDA would work also. Apple products come with a screen reader, VoiceOver. A built-in website screen reader might interfere with these programs.

Recommendation 3

The AWG members present would not recommend the City purchasing a built-in screen reader.

Observation: Some persons with low vision find it easier to see white text on a dark background and some the inverse.

Recommendation 4

Have an option to choose dark text on a white background.

Observation: Susan who has low vision was unable to find the resize or high contrast options. She found the large number of graphics made finding these features more difficult.

Recommendation 5

Place the resize and high contrast options in a location which is easy to find by someone with low vision or make the icon larger.

Observation: Search results can pose a challenge to persons using screen readers or those with low vision who can be overwhelmed by too much text.

Recommendation 6

Review how the search function prioritizes content so that the information someone is searching for appears at the beginning of the search results and possibly just give the minimal amount of text with a link to the full text.

Observation: Screen readers do not read the web page content in the same order as the information appears visually.

Recommendation 7

Important information and links need to be placed on the page in such a way that the screen reader will read them near the beginning as the screen reader user presses the down arrow key or navigates from heading to heading.

Observation: The link to the resident's services is hard to find using a screen reader.

Recommendation 8

Place the link to resident's services on the page so the screen reader reads it near the beginning.

Observation: Not all PDF documents on the City website are accessible. Some require Optical Character Recognition programs which many persons who are blind do not have due to their high price tag. Scanned documents which are saved as images (e.g. Engagement Road Map) are an example of inaccessible PDFs.

Recommendation 9

Determine which types of PDFs are accessible and set this as the City standard for all documents on the website. Provide a link to a Word version as an alternative if a scanned image of a document or inaccessible PDF is necessary.

Observation: Graphics are being used quite often on the website (e.g. infographic) and are very visual. Also there are videos with limited narration.

Recommendation 10

A text description should accompany information that is portrayed graphically or in a video with no narrative.

Observation: Government websites are starting to include links to an American Sign Language (ASL) video of important information.

Recommendation 11

Consult with the deaf community to determine the efficacy of ASL on websites and which content is most important.

Additional Notes

Linda has received the Connect newsletter by email but there is no newsletter information present when she opens it up. The email regarding Vic Alert also had no information. Heather observed that these were sent out using the same tool so there may be a setting which needs to be changed.

Action: Heather will send the Connect newsletter again to Linda.

Linda is not able to access all the features that a sighted user can when connecting to webcasts of Council meetings, agendas and reports. This is not under Heather's jurisdiction. Legislative Services is still working out the bugs of the new system.

Action: Linda will connect with Legislative Services through Brad at a later date if this continues to be an issue.