

ACCESSIBILITY WORKING GROUP MINUTES

Monday, January 8, 2018

1. Welcome and Roll Call:

Present: Linda Bartram, Robin Bayley (via Skype), Chris Marks, Susan Gallagher, Steve Bertrand, Chris Dobbie and his interpreters

Councillor: Councillor Jeremy Loveday, Councillor Thornton-Joe

Staff: Brad Dellebuur, Christine Brinton

Regrets: Paul Jones

2. Motion to accept the agenda of January 8, 2018, the following items were added to the agenda:

- Effectiveness of AWG meetings – Linda Bartram
- Motion Regarding Audible/Accessible Pedestrian Signals – Linda Bartram
- Motion Regarding Sidewalk Modification at the Bay Centre – Linda Bartram
- Councillor Update on Budget Process - Councillor Loveday
- Plastic Bag Regulation Update – Robin Bayley

Moved: Linda Bartram Seconded: Chris Dobbie CARRIED

3. Motion to accept the amended minutes of December 4, 2017 with the following change to “action” item:

Robin will forward her paper “input and questions on parking regulations for Dec 4, 2017” to Chris Marks, Christine Paisley, Chris Dobbie. ** Remove: The committee will then send a written report (within the next month) with their recommendations to City staff.**

Moved: Susan Gallagher Seconded: Chris Marks CARRIED

4. New Business:

- Effectiveness of AWG meetings –Linda Bartram – Linda reported that there were some technical issues with the audio and visual equipment at the December meeting. Robin was patched in late and she couldn’t get video (*the camera was accidentally unplugged*). Two members also had difficulties calling in on Skype, had to use the speaker phone, one was bumped out and had to alert members by email and use another member’s mobile phone on speaker to participate.

Linda reported that there is no centrally located accessible meeting room belonging to the City that can accommodate the special needs of all members of the AWG.

Steve Bertrand arrived at 4:15 pm

MOTION: Add to the “Issue’s List” (by Linda Bartram) as a priority 1 item, finding a meeting venue that is accessible to all members of the Accessibility Working Group.

Moved: Robin Bayley Seconded: Chris Marks CARRIED

Members discussed options including the CRD building (*which Chaz Whipp had looked into but was not accessible to all*) and Brad suggested City Studio on Johnson Street (700 Block).

Action: Brad will look into this venue

Linda reported that In December, no Council Liaison or staff apart from Christine (recording secretary) attended. The AWG discussed how it would be useful to have other staff members attend meetings to learn about accessibility and also to have an informed backup if Brad cannot attend. Brad reported that recruitment efforts are underway in Engineering and when staff is in place, they intend to return to the practice of having an alternate.

Linda asked members and attendees who cannot attend and have an agenda item with their name on it or for which they have something to report, to email a report or (for staff, send an alternate).

- Effectiveness of Consultations – Robin reported that having reviewed AWG minutes from 2017, it would be difficult to come up with an example of a project that has consulted with the AWG and done something differently based on AWG input, with the exception of infrastructure projects in Brad’s sphere. She suggested that AWG discuss at a future meeting how AWG conducts consultations and how to have its input heard, understood, seriously considered and properly reported to Council.

ACTION: Linda to add to agenda for an upcoming meeting, “Effectiveness of AWG Accessibility Consultations”

5. Business Arising:

- a) Off Street Parking – AWG Consultation Report – Linda asked for confirmation that the AWG Consultation Report was shared with appropriate staff. Brad confirmed he shared it with Jim Handy and Robert Batallas with a note recommending that the entire report be posted as an attachment, along with the staff report, so that Council has all the information. This report can now be posted to the AWG webpage.

As directed at the last AWG meeting, Robin had a phone meeting with Jim Handy, Robert Batallas and Daniel Casey. They started off the call reporting that they felt that there were information deficits regarding the points the AWG raised, and the project would be seeking funds for the contractor to carry out more research.

AWG discussed the importance of projects consulting with AWG at early stages, so that its input can shape project research and activities. When the AWG is consulted early, it can provide input that might shape the project, but when the AWG is consulted later, it can only provide feedback on what has been done. At later stages, there is a greater onus on the AWG to justify changes to already-formed plans. The later the consultation, the more difficult it is for the project to fully address accessibility considerations.

- b) Red Paint on Curbs (in Bus Zones) – Susan advised the AWG how important it is to have red paint on curbs for the visually impaired, as it is difficult to differentiate between the curb and the street when the red paint becomes faded. Brad reported that the City has a maintenance program for bus stops and the best way to have a problem location painted is to put in a service request. Two locations were identified - in front of the Crystal Pool and Richardson at Foul Bay.

ACTION: Susan will put in service request to Public Works for these two locations
<http://www.victoria.ca/EN/meta/contact/service-request-form.html>

- c) Financial Plan Update – Councilor Loveday updated the AWG on the 3 motions passed by COTW regarding accessibility during budget deliberations.

COTW Approved:

1. A one-time expenditure of \$40,000 for an Accessibility Framework
2. That Council direct staff to expedite the implementation of accessible pedestrian signals and work with the Accessibility Working Group to identify top priorities for implementation in 2018, and authorize an expenditure to be determined once a report has been received from staff from the Accessibility Reserve Fund for this purpose.
3. That Council direct staff to report back to Council on options for expediting the implementation of projects for accessibility upgrades and work with the Accessibility Working Group to prioritize projects for 2018 and to authorize the expenditures to come from the accessibility reserve fund.

AWG will work with engineering staff to develop a list of priorities and staff will report back to Council with costs to carry out work in 2018.

The final budget will be approved by Council on April 12, 2018.

- d) Audible Pedestrian Signals and Accessible Pedestrian Signals – Audible pedestrian signals are automatic and are not triggered by pushing a button or a vehicle sensor. Accessible pedestrian signals are when you push a button to activate the walk signal.

The AWG requests staff to present to Council as soon as possible, costs for the installation of: Audible Signals/Accessible Pedestrian Signals at the following locations:

1. Menzies/Superior
2. Government/Humboldt/Wharf
3. Quadra/Yates
4. Caledonia/Quadra
5. Burnside/Harriet
6. Fisgard/Quadra (to cross Quadra)
7. Finlayson/Quadra

The Committee agreed that, in case Council does not approve funding for all seven intersections, the intersections be addressed in priority order of the first requested to the most recent request.

ACTION: Brad will report to Council the costs associated with addressing all of these intersections with either APS or audible signals as appropriate, in the order of priority recommended by the AWG.

- e) Sidewalk Modification/Retrofit at the bus stop by the Bay Centre.

MOTION: AWG recommends that the sidewalk on the west side of Douglas adjacent to the Bay Centre be improved for wheelchair access to BC Transit.

Moved: Steve Bertrand Seconded: Susan Gallagher CARRIED

This motion is in addition to a previous motion recommending action to improve wheelchair access at the City Hall stop on Douglas Street.

The committee discussed its priority location, in the event that Council does not approve funding for improvements at both locations.

ACTION: Brad will do some research on costs, passenger volume, complaints, etc. and share findings with group before the next meeting, allowing the AWG to make a recommendation on which location would be its priority for sidewalk modification. Add as an agenda item for February meeting.

f) Dedicated bike Lanes Pedestrian Crossing Safety Improvements

The committee had previously passed a motion recommending pedestrian safety improvements for crossing bike lanes on Pandora Avenue, in the form of pavement markings. At this meeting, the committee recommended that this work be reported to Council as a 2018 priority.

Linda reported that she had attended a protected bike lane public consultation and that the AWG's concern about crossing over bike lanes to get to the bus stop is seriously being considered in future design decisions. Linda is now confident it will be addressed in the future.

ACTION: Staff will cost the above improvement and include it in the 2018 report to COTW re. the 2018 budget.

g) Royal Athletic Park – Steve Bertrand enquired about the status of upgrades.

ACTION: Staff to provide "Status Update on Royal Athletic Park upgrades at February meeting.

h) Accessibility Awareness Training – Linda reported that she had followed up with Jodi Jensen, from Human Resources who informed Linda by email that accessibility awareness training will be taken into consideration in work on the Accessibility Framework. Linda feels if the committee agrees that training is urgent and critical, it needs to advocate for this being a priority in the Accessibility Framework.

i) Accessibility Framework – Linda reported that she had sent again draft #2 of a document explaining what is envisioned in an Accessibility Framework to members and didn't hear from anyone. She opened the floor for any questions from members. Linda asked the committee if it could endorse the document, up to Establishing Priorities on page 3.

The AWG endorsed this vision of an implemented accessibility framework.

Action: Christine to append the portion of the document which has been endorsed to these minutes (attached).

Robin asked if Staff would accept member input about deliverables for the contractor for the Accessibility Framework. Brad said he would welcome input.

j) Balancing Pollinator Habitat and Allergy-Reduced plantings – Robin Bayley – Robin reported that shortly after COTW's motion directing staff to look into balancing pollinator and allergy concerns, COTW approved a pollinator garden next to a playground. She felt this indicated that work on both interests could proceed before Staff's report on the issue, and that allergen-reduced planting pilots could be carried out in the interim.

Robin received a note from Leigh Campbell, Manager, Parks Planning, Design and Development, that “As per the Council Motion, early in the new year staff will connect with the accessibility working group regarding balancing accessibility considerations with pollinator habitat.”

Robin stated her belief that the motion passed by COTW gives a false impression that the objectives are incompatible but actually they can both be accommodated. Brad reported that Parks staff he consulted with shared this view.

ACTION: The AWG nominated Robin Bayley as the AWG representative to participate on a committee or to liaise with staff and the Urban Food Table on the pollinator habitat/allergen-reduction project.

- k) Crystal Pool Update –Robin reported that In July, the AWG asked Brad to invite Crystal Pool Project Staff to attend an AWG meeting to obtain its input, and inquired about that status at several meeting since. The project website shows a timeline that has “refine design of new facility” happening in the fall 2017 and winter 2018. The AWG feels it can be most effective if consulted at the early stages of City initiatives. Members mentioned a number of accessibility related questions including way-finding for people with visual impairments, concerns about acoustics and how the building will affect people on the autism spectrum, and visual alarms for persons who are deaf.

During the meeting, Councillor Loveday emailed Thomas Soulliere, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities and indicated the AWG would like to be consulted early in the design process of the Crystal Pool to ensure the new pool is barrier free.

ACTION: Add further AWG discussion on Crystal Pool Project to February agenda, regardless of Project team attendance.

- l) “Statement of Commitment” to Accessibility – Councillor Loveday reported that he plans to submit, for COTW consideration on January 18, the motion previously moved by the AWG in October 2017. He forwarded it to AWG members to provide any input by morning, Thursday January 11.
- m) Clerks Advisory Committee Governance Project Update – Robin Bayley – Robin reminded members that it has been six months since COTW’s direction on August 10 to consult with affected committees on the draft policy, and the AWG has not formed an official committee response. Councillor Loveday advised COTW’s direction was for the Clerk to consult, and the Clerk will instigate that consultation, at which time, the AWG can provide its feedback.

n)

ACTION: Linda will add to February agenda AWG. Robin will revise the document in which she communicated her thoughts on the draft policy's implications, and Linda will share that with members prior to the February meeting.

- o) Plastic Bag Update – Robin Bayley - Robin reported that the Checkout Bag Regulation No. 18-008 (found at: <https://victoria.civicweb.net/FileStorage/0A98E03BA9AE48799481716578BB3DC4-18-008%20Checkout%20Bag%20Bylaw.pdf>) was approved at COTW and is scheduled for final approval by Council this week. None of the AWG's concerns or recommendations resulted in changes to the draft bylaw or implementation plans. An extract from AWG minutes was attached to the agenda at first, and after Linda brought the oversight to staff's attention, the AWG's formal Consultation Report with recommendations was appended only the day before the meeting (making it unlikely that Councillors read it). Robin reported how, in her opinion, the report of accessibility implications departed from best practice in several ways.

Brad reported back on a drafting/allergy issue Robin had raised outside the AWG meeting, stating that he had brought it to the attention of appropriate staff. The issue is whether the broader term "seafood" should be used instead of "fish" in the list of exceptions in 4(1)(c). The Bylaw will go to final reading on January 11, but because it will not be enacted until July 1st, there may be the opportunity to make minor amendments.

ACTION: Brad will discuss the issue with Fraser Work.

6. Next Meeting:

February 5, 2018 at 4:00 pm

7. Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm

Attachment

Attachment re. agenda item 5. (I,) Accessibility Framework

Explanation of an Accessibility Framework

An accessibility framework is the system of inter-related organizational components that work together to operationalize the goal of making an organization (its facilities, services, products, programs and employment) accessible. With an accessibility framework in place, the focus shifts from a reactive to a proactive approach to improving accessibility to all citizens including persons with disabilities.

A strong framework will reflect the commitment the City of Victoria already has to the interests and needs of persons with disabilities and will help support all departments within the City in complying with the legislation and Council direction. It will establish shared accountability and responsibility for accessibility for persons with disabilities and establish the tools and processes required improve accessibility over time.

Components may include:

- A top level statement of organizational commitment
- Assigned responsibility to a senior executive
- Establishment of an organizational unit with functional responsibility for accessibility, with appropriate knowledge, skills, authority and resources. [Note, the AWG has support staff assigned, but this is not the same as assigning overall responsibility]
- planning, budgeting and approval processes that incorporate consideration of accessibility
- Measurements (e.g., public surveys, # of barriers, results of audits, so that a baseline is established and progress can be known and reported]
- Inventory of known and unaddressed barriers
- Inventory of policies and procedures requiring review and amendment
- Reporting mechanisms
- policies and procedures that give effect to the accessibility goals (see below)

Working with the City of Victoria to draft policies and procedures to prevent the creation of barriers in the future, is in the AWG's mandate. Such policies and procedures (deliverables) may include:

- Documenting a planning and budgeting system that requires proactive consideration of barriers to accessibility and active planning for their removal.
- Procedure for requesting individualized reasonable accommodation for programs and services, well publicized, easy to find and documented for accountability and fairness
- policies and procedures for assessing and *responding* to accommodation requests
- policy regarding assessment of new initiatives for their accessibility implications at various stages
- policies and standards for production of accessible websites
- policies and standards for production of and navigation to accessible documents
- policies and procedures for accessible consultation and public meetings
- inclusive hiring policies and practices
- policies to improve accessibility to City Hall and facilities from an environmental perspective
- a reasonable accommodation policy for staff

- infrastructure standards beyond the building code, CSA, TAC and BCMMCD standards, to address identified barriers
- building maintenance and cleaning procedures (for non-toxicity, skid-proof floors, etc.)
- Policy requiring proactive identification of ways to systemically improve access to programs (e.g., swim lifts, accessible public art, multiple formats for public information, alternative delivery mechanisms such as remote access or electronic service delivery).

Controls may include:

- review and sign-off of new website content and published documents prior to their publication
- required sign off of accessibility review for new initiatives
- program of rotating accessibility audits, which are in the original AWG mandate
- HR review of all job descriptions and job requirements to ensure that they are not discriminatory (are all bone fide?)
- AWG review of job descriptions to ensure that they outline any accessibility related responsibilities
- Sign off of procurement documents to ensure they are not discriminatory and contain accessibility standards or criteria
- Language scan in City documents (e.g., reasonable accommodation and accessibility are used in imprecise ways, and to detect and remove ableist imagery and language)

Other possible elements

- Accessibility Plan (incorporating strategies and tasks or projects from every organizational unit) and progress updates. This need not be a stand-alone plan; it can be a plan contained within existing plans and management processes.
- A staff Accessibility Training Plan and standard, wherein all staff receive basic training (with content such as legal responsibilities, ableism, principles of accommodation, communicating with disabled members of the public, etc.) and all other staff receive training appropriate to their area of work. For instance, workshops to help them recognize and determine how to remove barriers.
- Signage and communications efforts to reinforce policies and draw attention to availability of alternative customer service means.
- Processes to ensure accessibility in procurement (communicates accessibility standards and ensures that procured goods and services are accessible)
- External communications strategy – to ensure that disabled populations are reached, and that the organization’s communications are accessible to various groups
- Public Consultation outreach process to ensure that disability viewpoints are received.
- Program of ongoing revision of policies, procedures and controls
- Job descriptions and a staff evaluation program that makes every employee understand how they are responsible and will be held accountable for contributing to the organization’s accessibility
- Reporting on work undertaken and planned to reach accessibility accountability goals
- Partnership agreements, grant applications, etc. to access special funding from outside sources
- Providing input into federal and possible provincial legislative consultation processes on accessibility legislation. (First round of federal consultation ends Feb 2017)