

MINUTES OF THE ACCESSIBILITY WORKING GROUP
MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2017

1. THE CHAIR CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 4:03 P.M.

Present: Linda Bartram (Chair), Susan Gallagher, Paul Jones, Steve Bertrand, Chris Marks, Chris Dobbie, Robin Bayley (via skype)
Councillors: Councillor Jeremy Loveday, Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe
Staff: Brad Dellebuur, Christine Brinton
Guests: Mary and Keith (interpreters) and Christine (from the Victoria Disability Resource Centre)

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Accessibility Working Group (AWG) reviewed the agenda and made the following changes: move Accessibility Framework to the May agenda, addition of Belleville Street Sidewalk Improvements and the proposal of taking one month off to catch up.

Motion: It was moved by Linda Bartram, seconded by Paul Jones that the agenda of Monday, April 3, 2017 AWG meeting be approved as amended.

Carried

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 6, 2017

Motion: It was moved by Linda Bartram seconded by Susan Gallagher, that the minutes of the AWG meeting held March 6, 2017 be approved as circulated.

Carried

4. NEW BUSINESS

Guest Speaker - Dacian Filipescu - Dacian is a 12 year old student who lives with Duchene Muscular Dystrophy, hoping to raise awareness about the difficulties accessing businesses in downtown Victoria that do not have accessible entrances. He experiences barriers with steps and lack of automated door openers. Dacian's goal is to have one additional automatic door opener installed by the end of 2017 and 20 installed by the end of 2020. Dacian's first business he would like to have accessible would be Curious Comics.

The AWG asked Dacian if he would like to become a member of AWG if youth were eligible to join, and he indicated he would. He was invited to attend AWG meetings whenever he wished and to also take the accessibility survey that can be found on the City of Victoria website <http://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/city/mayor-council-committees/other-boards-committees/accessibility-working-group.html>)

Guest Speaker: BC Transit – David Guthrie, General Manager, Operations, Victoria

The AWG held a lengthy discussion regarding curb heights, dedicated bus stops and the elimination of bus stops in the downtown core.

Issues raised:

1. **Curb heights** on the sidewalk / bus stop in front of City Hall and in front of the Bay Centre - the slope of the bus ramp and the sidewalk grade make it difficult and sometimes dangerous to get on and off certain buses when using a wheelchair. David Guthrie advised the AWG that smaller buses have more difficulty with the varying curb heights in the downtown core. David Guthrie advised the AWG the best thing to do would be to have patrons report concerns experienced for particular trips, to the bus telephone line 250-382-6161, indicating the bus number and direction of travel, the time of travel and the bus stop which posed the problem. This way, Transit can figure out exactly which buses are problematic as each call is logged and followed up. Some of the identified problem buses are being removed from service in the next two years.
2. The need for **dedicated Stops within multi-route Bus Zones** - Fort & Douglas, Bay Centre, and Douglas & Kings are examples where several buses can arrive at once and persons with disabilities may not be aware of or be able to get to the third/fourth bus before it pulls away. Dave Guthrie advised the blocks are short blocks in the downtown core and there is not enough space to have specific buses pull in at specific points. The new system coming will have a speaker on the outside of the bus stating the bus number. The AWG pointed out that given the noise in bus stop areas this will not help persons who cannot read the bus number unless the bus stops where they are standing. It will also not help persons in wheelchairs or seniors with walkers maneuver around all the obstacles to get to a bus down the block. Areas surrounding bus stops often have a number of such obstacles.
3. **Changes to Transit Service Notifications** - The AWG would like BC Transit to advise facilities such as CNIB when they make changes to bus routes and bus stops. David Guthrie advised the AWG that website alerts, auto emails and/or texts are available if you subscribe to BC transit notifications. There is another app called transitapp that is very useful <https://transitapp.com/>. It will alert users to the exact position of a particular bus.
4. **Perfume allergies and related conditions** – It was noted that buses are not accessible to people with scent related allergies and sensitivities, and that City transportation planning needs to take into account that not everyone can take the bus.
5. **Elimination of bus stops** – The AWG is concerned about elimination of bus stops on Fort Street as part of the bike lane project. Transit endeavours to have bus stops positioned no more than 300 metres apart, but there is competition for curb space downtown. No undertaking was made to address AWG concerns.

5. BUSINESS ARISING

- a) **Motion to make AWG meetings scent and pet dog free** - Robin Bayley has been looking for options to address lack of accessibility of City Hall for herself and others with scent and pet allergies and similar medical conditions. In the absence of Council permission to develop a building-wide allergen reduction policy, Robin is considering asking the AWG and other Council committees to hold scent and pet free meetings and include the following in meeting notices "meetings are scent and pet free". However, she feels that the best place for such rules could be the Council Procedures by-law.

Points raised:

- The "pet-friendly" position is not a formal, approved policy. The practice was included with a package of customer service changes and was not subject to analysis of potential negative effects, or public scrutiny and discussion.
- There are no restrictions where pets can go inside City Hall, and they can and do go to carpeted areas where the allergens are difficult to remove.
- Interactions with pets are different than with assistance animals, and pet interactions spread more allergens.
- It is difficult to go anywhere in City Hall without passing the Public Service Centre, where the Ambassador dispensing dog treats and most dogs are.
- Robin continues to advocate for a "scent reduction" vs. "scent-free" policy, to address enforcement issues. Awareness and signage is needed. "You won't get compliance if you don't even ask".
- Scented cleaning products, and air fresheners could be eliminated.

b) **Status Reports:**

- **Accessibility Survey** - the survey is out but it can't be printed from the website. It has been sent to over 90 disability groups to distribute.

Action: Brad will follow up regarding making hard copies available in the Service Centre, for those who cannot complete it online.

- The **Barrier Buster** application was submitted on Friday, March 31, 2017.

6. NEW BUSINESS (CON'T)

a) **Proclamation for Allergy Awareness**

It was moved by Robin Bayley, seconded by Linda Bartram *That the Accessibility Working Group support a request to Council for proclamation for Food Allergy Awareness week from May 14 to 20, 2017.*

CARRIED

There was discussion about the AWG sponsoring other motions to raise awareness of specific conditions in future. Members are to request a motion of the AWG to sponsor a Proclamation.

Action: Robin Bayley to submit the separate proclamation and provide the additional text. Councillor Loveday will forward the contact information to Robin.

b) Definition for the terms Accessibility and Barriers

Linda Bartram Moved that the circulated definitions for “accessibility” and for “barriers” be endorsed by AWG. The AWG members stated they needed more time to review the definitions as they had been circulated to members only 4 days prior to the meeting.

c) Belleville Street Sidewalk Improvements

Linda reported that there was a report on the COTW agenda for the following Thursday, in which Brad Dellebuur and staff have included an accessibility statement that included plans for truncated domes. Brad provided clarification about the statement. He anticipates that the truncated dome pilot will be successful and he wanted to ensure that the budget for sidewalk upgrades would include a line item for truncated domes.

Linda again raised the concern of making mid-block crossings safer for vision impaired pedestrians. This concern has yet to be addressed.

Brad explained that the accessible ramp to the lower causeway may be altered in the future.

Robin raised her concerns regarding the need for the planting of non-allergenic tree species. Trees are chosen from the Urban Forestry Master Plan, but there is no indication that allergies were considered when this plan was drawn up.

Action: Brad will forward Robin’s concerns to the Parks Department contacts.

d) All Candidates Forum

The Disability Resource Centre will be sponsoring an all candidates forum on April 27, 2017 at the Central Library on Broughton Street in the Community Room at 6:30 pm. Christine Paisley will forward additional information via email to Christine Brinton to distribute.

e) Addressing member workload?

Paul would like it to be noted that there are many irons in the fire and he is finding it difficult to find time to comment on everything distributed. He would like to regroup and do some homework for catching up on issues. He suggested taking the top 3 priorities and finish these, then move onto the next issue. Susan suggested not having guest speakers for a while.

Action: The May meeting will be dedicated to taking stock and determining priorities.

e) Consideration of single use plastic bag ban and persons with disabilities
Deferred.

f) Proposed Terms of Reference as an Advisory Committee
Deferred.

7. ADJOURNMENT – 5:55 pm

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - May 1, 2017 at 4:00 pm