

Accessibility Working Group Meeting Minutes

March 4 2019

1. Welcome and Introductions:

AWG members - Linda Bartram (Chair), Robin Bayley, Susan Gallagher, Paul Jones.

Steve Bertrand and Chris Dobbie arrived after meeting had started

Regrets: Chris Marks

Liaison - Doug Nutting

Admin Support – Kelly Anne

Director of Parks and Rec – Thomas Soulliere

Council Liaison- Sarah Potts

Regrets – Jeremy Loveday

Sign language interpreters - Mary & Kat

Visitor - Christine Paisley

Doug Nutting explained his history and connection with the City and his role as staff liaison. He will act as an AWG advocate

Action: Doug will take back to the City, Robin's concerns regarding the lack of a formal contract and clear guidelines around privacy and confidentiality of information shared by AWG members.

Action: Linda will circulate to AWG members, the description Doug read out regarding his role.

Councilor Potts acknowledged that there is a problem with getting AWG decisions in front of Council.

2. Approval of agenda 4:55

Added Accessibility Framework and update of recent COTW decisions.

Moved by Linda, seconded by Robin, carried with 1 opposed.

3. Approval of Dec 3 2018 minutes with the addition of Christine Paisley's name as a visitor and the following amendment: Under Business Arising: d) Christine Paisley will reach out to David Willows and see if he can attend COTW on Thursday on behalf of the Disability Resource Centre Parking Committee. Should read attend City Council meeting not COTW.
Moved by Linda, seconded by Susan, carried

4. Business Arising
 - a) Strategic and financial plan:

\$250,000 was approved for the implementation of the Accessibility Framework. This is operational funding and is in addition to the \$250,000 (infrastructure/capital) accessibility Reserve funding. Any unspent funds from the operational funding will go into the accessibility reserve fund. This operational funding will not be specified to a specific department and can be accessed by any department implementing recommendations from the Accessibility Framework (AF).

None of the individual recommendations made by AWG with financial implications were approved by Council and it is assumed that they all were referred to the \$250,000 AF implementation funding. This was the case for AWG's parking study recommendation.

Doug suggested that with regards to accessible parking, the City could adopt CSA 651, echoing what AWG had recommended in September. It appeared that neither this AWG recommendation or David Willows comprehensive report had been shared with the City's Parking Manager until very recently. AWG members expressed their on-going frustration with the process of having to share invaluable information with Council through staff. The AWG and in this case, the Disability Resource Centre Parking Committee have done extensive research which staff do not appear to have communicated to other staff or to Council.

Aside from the \$250,000 operational funding, there were approved motions for two small Planning Department projects: incentivizing accessible suites and putting out guidance for accessible housing to overcome gaps in the building code.

Thomas reported that there is a need for a single matrix with all AWG recommendations, their status, priority etc. to be developed and maintained. AWG reiterated that the Issues List was established to accomplish this. All issues have been given a priority number. AWG has endeavored to keep this list up to date but it has been difficult to keep the status current as AWG does not always know what steps staff and/or Council have taken. AWG has to make a considerable effort to access and read staff reports and follow what is decided at COTW/Council meetings. Thomas also indicated that there needs to be a regular check in with AWG as initiatives and projects progress and not just at the beginning and end as has been the case in the past.

Action: Linda to update the issues list and then share with staff.

Councilor Potts indicated that she and Councilor Loveday would like to focus on two AWG issues a month to work through the backlog.

Action: Linda to canvas AWG members to identify two priority issues (one operational and one infrastructure) for the Council liaisons to work on over the next month.

Invictus Games: This is in the very early stages with the City planning to put in a bid for the games for 2022. AWG is concerned about the accessibility implications which were not outlined in the AIS in staff's report to Council. Thomas assured AWG that there will definitely be discussions with AWG as the application process moves forward.

b) Unsafe angle of bus ramp at City Hall:

Reply from transit to Brad's enquiry - December 11/18 - from James Wadsworth, Planning Manager at BC Transit: "The timeline is still correct for the 45, the last 5 buses should be replaced the following fiscal year, in 2021."

AWG feels waiting until 2021 to find out if the issue is resolved is not acceptable. It was also pointed out that when Council voted to support staff's recommendation not to proceed with a \$200,000 sidewalk upgrade, they also charge staff to continue to work with AWG to find an alternate solution. This has not happened.

Action: Doug to approach staff to come back to AWG to discuss other solutions.

c) AWG decided to put an invitation to the Planning department to attend an AWG meeting, on the back burner

d) Accessibility Impact Statements - Email follow-up from Brad "Individual Directors review and sign off staff reports from their department, prior to being forwarded to Legislative Services for publication on upcoming agendas. Draft AIS policy (updated 2 5 2018) re-sent to the City Clerk December 14/18 for distribution to Directors, suggesting it be used as a guide until a formal policy is developed."

Doug is still awaiting a response from the Clerk to determine which policy Brad was referring to and if it has been distributed. AWG shared a draft policy outline with Brad in March 2017 but is not aware of an update in Feb 2018 or a formal policy having been adopted. AIS continue to be less than satisfactory at best and often non-existent. A scope for AIS needs to be established which identifies which types of reports need an AIS.

Action: Doug will follow up with the Clerk's office and circulate feedback to AWG as soon as he gets it.

e) The following motion was passed unanimously by AWG by email vote.

Moved by Robin, seconded by Linda

"The AWG recommends that Council direct staff that one of the first quarterly Town Hall meetings be on the topic of improving accessibility, that food barriers to access not be introduced for this event, that the event be held in as accessible a forum as possible and with accessibility procedures and features."

Action: Councilor Potts will advocate for this to happen.

f) APS pilot update

Doug read a report from Philip Bellefontaine (Transportation) which included the following:

Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) are the new City standard and the City will consider APS at all new installations that are not located in the downtown core. The downtown intersections do

not have push buttons and will continue to have audible signals installed. APS will also be considered with the traffic signal rebuilds (maintenance). Staff have chosen beaconing activation (extended press of the button to activate the audible signal) to mitigate the public's perceived nuisance of audible signals. The audible signal is only activated when it is needed rather than every time the button is pushed. Staff welcome input from AWG as to how to inform the public in general and those who require the audible signal in particular. Staff's message has been that if you hear the locator tone, then the pole is equipped with APS which can be activated with an extended press of the button for 3 seconds. AWG emphasized that this is not a procedure that is familiar to those living in Victoria so public awareness is essential. AWG provided the City with an extensive list of disability related organizations during the accessibility survey conducted two years ago. Seniors centres and schools need also to be made aware.

The following locations now have APS: Gorge and Washington, Hillside and Gosworth, Bay and Richmond, Quadra and Finlayson, Quadra and Fisguard, Johnson and Fernwood, Pandora and Fernwood (under construction), Government and Humboldt, Menzies and Superior (under construction).

There is still the need for people who require an APS at a particular crossing, to be able to request the crossing be addressed as a priority. It is also felt that staff should be assessing and planning to address the most dangerous crossings first not just working down a rebuild list.

Action: The City's Communication department will be approached by Thomas/Doug to get the word out.

Action: Doug will approach Transportation requesting that they make requests for APS from the public a priority and that they take steps to actively determine the most dangerous intersections and move these up the priority list. He will remind them that AWG passed a motion requesting that Council direct staff to address all intersections by 2021.

g) Truncated dome pilot project:

Doug read a report from Transportation that indicated that all 7 identified locations will be installed by May subject to weather conditions. Locations: Douglas and Hillside, Blanshard and Hillside, Bay and Government, Bay and Douglas, Cedar Hill and North Dairy, Bay and Richmond, Shakespeare and Hillside all to have yellow mats. These are the locations agreed upon by AWG in 2017.

As this is a true pilot, there needs to be a plan for how the pilot will be conducted; publicity, how to use them, where to give feedback. Robin provided Jacqueline Weston with the evaluation process used in a Toronto truncated dome pilot in 2016 and suggests that a similar plan be adopted by Victoria.

Action: Doug to invite Transportation to attend AWG to discuss the scope of the pilot and what will be the evaluation criteria, and to look seriously at the Toronto evaluation process.

h) Crossing over bike lane on Pandora

Doug read a report from Transportation which included the following: The City followed all guidelines that were in place when installing the protected bike lane. Several other cities including Saanich and Vancouver have similar bus stop configurations. AWG did not exist when Pandora bike lane was being designed. The issue was identified as part of a walk through in June 2017. The City monitored the situation, and continued with education efforts. An x marking was added to the lane with additional crosswalk signage in the summer of 2018. The bus stop on Wharf at Yates (still under construction) will be a similar design to accommodate the bike lane along Wharf. It will have additional features to improve pedestrian safety including: tactile domes on the sidewalk and at the bus stop, pedestrian activated flashing amber lights on the bus island and on the sidewalk with Aps and audible locator tone. If these additional measures prove to improve cyclist compliance and pedestrian safety, then similar measures will be taken at the bus stops on Pandora as part of a future capital project.

AWG disputes one of the facts in the report. The potential issue was pointed out to Brad by Linda and Susan in January/February 2017 at which time it was stated that it was too late to introduce modifications such as an audible signal. AWG also articulated that staff need to be present at AWG meetings to provide clarification rather than just sending a report.

Action: Doug will ask what actual pavement markings and signage will be installed on Wharf and confirm that the signal (not just the locator tone) will be audible when the flashing light is activated. Transportation to be asked to bring plans for the Wharf and Yates location to the next meeting and provide Linda with a talk through ahead of the meeting.

i) Scramble crosswalks

Doug read a report from Transportation which indicated that they wish to meet with AWG to get feedback about implementing a decision that has already been made, not to ask our input as to whether there are any concerns about a pending decision. The answer to AWG's question as to why they were not consulted was not addressed.

j) Balancing accessibility Concerns with pollinator habitat update

AWG is very concerned that the Urban Forest Masterplan does not consider human health and safety as one of its criteria for making plant selection decisions. AWG had expected Parks to continue the dialogue regarding balancing needs after AWG's preliminary meeting with Parks and the Urban Food Table. Instead Parks presented two recommendations to Council in such a way as to imply that these were the result of consultations when in fact, AWG does not believe these measures will be particularly effective and they do not address the goal of finding a balance. Council was not made aware of AWG's concerns and suggested solutions to these concerns in the staff report. AWG's recommendation to fund a study was not approved by Council.

Thomas outlined the two actions Parks is proposing; drafting publicity materials to raise public awareness about allergens and plants in the public realm (e.g. signage, on line resources) and the horticultural staff are looking at trees that are causing allergic reactions when plant selection decisions are being made. There is also to be more communication with residents when trees are to be replaced to discuss their preferences. AWG feels that human health and safety should carry more weight than other preferences (needs should outweigh wants) and that there should be a policy on this. Fast tracking implementation of the Urban Forest Masterplan without policies around human health and safety may result in the creation of accessibility barriers which will last for decades.

Action: Parks staff will include AWG's concerns in a street planting plan which Council has requested.

k) Accommodating children with allergies and City run programs

The recent Active Living Guide does include a section regarding children with allergies but this was not included in the index.

Action: Parks will update the on line guide to reference the accessibility page in the index immediately and in the print guide at the next publication cycle.

The guide is not accessible to persons who are blind so there is a special link for screen reader users.

Action: Doug will send Linda the link.

AWG appreciates the efforts made to date and they demonstrate that staff are treating this as a priority. It had been AWG's hope, however, that a draft of the accessibility information would have been provided to AWG to review prior to publication. As this was not done, there are gaps in the information. Robin circulated a critique of the guide to AWG members, pointing out things which have not been addressed.

Action: Thomas will arrange a meeting between Robin and recreation staff responsible for training to have a conversation about the additional things that need to be taken into consideration and included in the guide in the future.

AWG again reiterated that they possess a wealth of knowledge and lived experience that staff does not take advantage of and that this is at the route of most of the frustration AWG members continue to experience. Linda referenced the session on levels of engagement at the Strategic Plan Engagement Summit and thinks that the level of engagement staff wants and the level that AWG wants may not be the same and this leads to frustration on AWG's part.

Action: Going forward Linda will encourage staff and AWG to clarify what level of engagement each is expecting for each issue being discussed.

L) Accessibility Framework

AWG is wondering if they will see the original consultant recommendations or a modified staff version. AWG has been told that they will not see staff reports to Council prior to it being posted five days before COTW, but could AWG see and comment on the final AF recommendations? If not, the Chair will have to continue with the very unsatisfactory practice of hurriedly putting together a report (not endorsed by the AWG as a whole) to send directly to Council in the hopes that they will be more fully informed. AWG also hopes that the Chair will be invited to appear at COTW when the final staff report is presented to Council as was done in January 2017 and where the Mayor encouraged this practice to be repeated whenever there was an issue of significance being presented.

m) The following agenda items were deferred to a later meeting. Paws in Parks, List of transactions that must be done in person, Accessible voting.

5. New Business

Food at public engagement sessions was added to the Issues list and given a priority rating of 1.

6. The next AWG meeting will be held on Monday April 1 from 4:30 – 6:00 at the Cook Street Village Activity Centre.