

Accessibility Working Group Minutes

July 2 2019

1. Welcome and roll call:

AWG Members – Linda Bartram, Robin Bayley, Paul Jones, Chris Marks

Regrets – Susan Gallagher, Chris Dobbie

Council Liaisons: Jeremy Loveday, Sarah Potts

Liaison & support: Doug Nutting, Barbara Michel

Guest: Regan (member of the public)

2. Approval of amended agenda

Added enforcement of accessible parking stalls on private property & third report from May 21 meeting sought by Sarah.

Moved by Linda, seconded by Chris, carried

3. Approval of June 3 2019 minutes with spelling correction and formatting

Moved by Robin, seconded by Paul, carried

4. Business arising

a) Admin support of AWG

Linda outlined the admin support that had been provided up until the end of AWG's mandate. Since the AWG's Interim TOR was adopted earlier this year, admin support has been sketchy and most recently Linda received the following email from Kelly-Anne:

“I apologize for not being able to spend more time polishing the formatting. I attended to the yellow highlights where I could help. Version 3 is attached. Going forward, I’ve been directed to post the AWG minutes as you submit them.”

Linda will continue to draft the minutes (and agendas) from her recording and is just asking for her drafts to be formatted, distributed and posted. Council liaisons indicated that this is reasonable.

Other committees have staff admin support. Barbara provides support to Doug, not AWG.

Action: Councilor Loveday will speak to staff and if they are not willing/able to provide the admin support being requested, he will format drafts himself.

Action: Going forward, if Linda is not able to attend a meeting, she will ensure an alternate solution for the minutes is arranged.

Robin raised her concerns about records management. Many research documents and reference lists have been provided by AWG to staff over the past four years. How can we ensure that this invaluable information is not lost with staff turn-over?

Action: Councilor Potts will look into whether a Records Management system is in place and if not, how information provided by AWG to staff can be archived.

b) Motions getting to Council

Robin has observed that staff are missing opportunities to report AWG recommendations (motions) to Council in the course of their regular reports and if they do report them, they are not necessarily reported as motions but as requests. In such cases, Council will not see the original motion. In addition, not all outstanding AWG motions are included in the Quarterly Report. AWG indicated that Council’s motion of May 28 2018 which directs non-time sensitive AWG motions to be reported by staff to Council in the next Quarterly Report and time sensitive motions to be brought to Council by the Council liaisons, is not working well.

Action: Going forward, AWG Council liaisons will bring all AWG motions to Council as soon as possible so they can be officially recorded with the

understanding that discussion of some will be deferred to the Accessibility Framework.

Action: If there are specific recommendations that have fallen through the cracks, AWG members should bring them back to a meeting so another recommendation can be considered and then taken to Council.

c) Accessibility Town Hall

Linda and Robin have been working with Bill Eisenhauer to ensure that the Town Hall is as accessible as possible given the challenge that some disabilities have competing needs. AWG appreciates the efforts being made by Engagement in this regard. AWG agreed that it is important to determine which disabilities are represented by the attendees and a “ballot” box where participants could write down their disability on a piece of paper and deposit it in the box was supported. This would be voluntary.

Action: Linda will follow up with Bill Eisenhauer to determine if staff will be doing this. If not, AWG could welcome participants and facilitate this process.

An electronic feedback form was discussed. AWG members will participate as individuals. It was suggested that the Council-approved, high level, Statement of Commitment to accessibility be read out at the beginning of the meeting.

Action: Council liaisons will ensure that this statement is read out at the Town Hall.

Robin reported that staff are making much of remote participation even though it was clearly stated by the AWG in June that what is being proposed is not full participation. The AWG accepts the limitations which the Conference Centre poses with regards to remote options and feels staff should not be touting what they are offering as innovative.

d) Special Accessibility Framework Focus group

AWG has many questions and concerns about the purpose of this focus group, the procurement and mandate of the new consultants and the lack of communication details from staff given the heavy investment of the AWG. Jeremy and Doug encouraged AWG members to attend the meeting and to come with an open mind.

Action: AWG members are asked to review the meeting package as soon as they receive it and contact the other AWG members if they feel a pre-focus group meeting of the AWG is needed.

Linda referred to the reference to staff training in the plan circulated by Fraser Work. Sarah stated that she has discussed staff training with staff on many occasions. It appears that staff may be considering something more extensive than AWG is proposing. AWG has been promoting that some form of awareness training should be undertaken for senior staff and Council since its report to Council in January 2017. Subsequent to this report, AWG provided a number of delivery-ready accessibility training resources to staff. AWG feels the basics could be covered in a one day (or even 2 hour) workshop which should include: overview of organizational responsibility under the Human Rights Act, basic principles of accommodation, types of mitigations including the principle that inclusion and main-streaming is always preferable. Local sources of training are available, possibly RIV, Disability Alliance, Richmond program, SPARC, Neil Squire.

Action: Sarah will follow up with staff with this new (to her) information.

e) Options for a landing zone at bus stop at City Hall

Philip Bellefontaine sent the following written report through Doug:

“Staff have assessed this situation further. The situation highlighted is understood and appreciated. There is currently no budget available for remediation measures either in the form of regrading of the curb and sidewalk or the creation of a new wheelchair landing area and ramp. Staff currently anticipate improvements to the sidewalk happening in conjunction with broader improvements to Centennial Square. Unfortunately, the condition highlighted at this particular location (the low curb height) is not unique and is experienced at numerous bus pick up and drop off locations across the City and through coordination with other capital projects (sidewalk replacement or road repaving for example) the City will seek to reduce these.”

Robin reminded the meeting that when Council supported staff's recommendation not to proceed with a \$200,000 sidewalk upgrade, they directed staff to continue to try to come up with an alternate, less costly solution. The upgrades to Centennial Square are not included in the current 4-year Strategic Plan.

Action: Doug will go back to Philip and ask how much the options referred to in his report, would cost and point out that there is an infrastructure fund that is now estimated at about \$1,000,000 which could fund mitigations.

- f) Approval of patios which obscure sidewalks – deferred to next meeting

Action: Doug to invite Planning staff to discuss this issue at the next meeting.

- g) Tactile strips at mid-block bus stops

Philip Bellefontaine provided the following written report shared by Doug:

“With the publication of the 2019 BC Active Transportation Design Guide, the current Human Rights claim against the City plus our learning from projects implemented within the City, staff are planning to bring forward a report to Council in due course on recommended standard treatments. Discussion around the use of tactile paving will be included in the report. Staff are anticipating this report go forward for Council consideration in July.”

Doug shared a diagram from the CNIB publication “Clearing our Path” which has a tactile strip in the sidewalk indicating where to turn to find the bus stop and then truncated domes warning of the curb. They are at right angles to each other. Linda reported that Vienna has a fabulous way-finding system in its underground transit system which she would be happy to describe to staff.

- h) Accessible voting follow up – deferred

- i) Staff response to Accessibility of the Planted Environment - Urban Gardening and Pollen Allergies in the City of Victoria

Sarah reported that Accessibility/Human Health have been added to the criteria considered by Parks about the planted environment. Parks now has a list it refers to when making planting decisions. Human health/accessibility is not however, a criterion in the Urban forest Masterplan.

“Because of the efforts of the AWG the city’s horticulture team has already incorporated low allergenicity into the plant selection process (AWG is contributing to this list) as one of the many factors considered. Although not

always possible, they strive to create environmentally adaptive landscape plantings with the incorporation of native and adaptive species that are drought tolerant, of high amenity value and supportive of pollinators and other wildlife while applying the lens of accessibility. A good example of this can be seen in the recent Johnson Street Bridge West planting in which plant species were selected to optimize all of these considerations. Many of the plants selected are strong pollinator friendly species capable of providing habitat and sustenance while being low allergen and excellent in terms of accessibility for those experiencing pollen allergies. The upcoming Songhees Park Expansion project (where staff took AWGs recommendation of a low allergen demonstration project and incorporated it into the project plan) is another example.”

Doug circulated a document provided by Nav in Parks which included the plant selection criteria and accessibility is listed. The document also included a table for the Johnson Street Bridge west project referred to by Sarah, which included individual plant OPAL ratings and total OPALs based on number of plants.

Robin has been providing input on the City’s planting list and guide. She pointed out that these documents were developed to address community gardens on City land and not all planting situations. The plant list is limited to annuals/bulbs, groundcover/ferns, perennials, shrubs and ornamental grasses; not trees or ground covers (lawns) which can be the worst sources of allergens. She is concerned that there is “purpose creep” for the document and that it is being touted as the mitigation strategy for all planting decisions including the whole Urban Gardening & Food program, despite the fact that the document is still being finalized and is remains limited in scope.

AWG acknowledges that Things appear to be moving in the right direction but not in a coordinated and comprehensive way and some areas such as playgrounds, mold and stinging insects have not been specifically addressed. An over-arching policy to take human health and accessibility into consideration for all planting decisions over which the City has jurisdiction, is needed.

Action: Doug to keep AWG informed as to the meeting of all concerned parties being organized by Nav, to collectively work out a strategy to address the issues

and determine next steps. AWG members to attend this meeting to support Robin.

5. New Business

Enforcement of accessible parking stalls on private property such as malls – deferred

6. Next meeting – August 12 (unless conflicts with AF meetings)

7. Adjournment – 6:23