



Accessibility Advisory Committee

MINUTES

Wednesday, April 26, 2023

Open to public attendance in Committee Room G

Lower Level, City Hall

Committee members may attend electronically

PRESENT:

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	Chair
Karen Basran	Committee Member
	Human Resources Business Partner
Anne Bélanger*	Committee Member
Taryn Bruckshaw	Committee Member
Iris Cheng	Committee Member
Shannon Dolton*	Committee Member
Hazel Fitzpatrick*	Committee Member
Nancy Kato	Committee Member
Vic Leach	Committee Member
Susan MacAndrew	Committee Member
Karla Olson*	Committee Member
Wendy Parry*	Committee Member
Julia Schoennagel	Committee Member

GUESTS:

Miles Ambridge*	Student/Community Member
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STAFF PRESENT:

Mike Anderson	Manager of Transportation
Zaria Alibhai	Coordinator, Public Engagement and Communications
Hailey Finnigan	Communications Coordinator
Shelly Schnee	Program Coordinator, Seniors
Katie Stobbart	Committee Clerk, Legislative Services

*Denotes electronic attendance

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. He acknowledged that colonialism has made

invisible their histories and connections to the land. He recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

2. INTRODUCTIONS

The Committee began with a round of introductions.

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT Miles Ambridge be allowed to participate in the committee discussion.

Carried.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

None.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 March 22, 2023

MOVED AND SECONDED

THAT the Minutes of the March 22, 2023 Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted, with the correction of an error in Mike Anderson's title.

Carried.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

5. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

5.1 Organization Accessibility Plan: Next Steps

Karen Basran, Human Resources Business Partner, and Zaria Alibhai, Coordinator, Public Engagement and Communications, provided a presentation titled "Accessibility Advisory Committee" which included background on the need for the committee, guiding principles, and milestones that need to be met.

In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Basran and Ms. Alibhai advised:

- The principles are broad to serve as a starting point. Many organizations are doing this work already, but not encompassed under an accessibility plan;
- If the committee would like, it is possible to engage with the broader community on the plan;

- The expected deliverable is the accessibility plan. There is awareness that the first iteration of the plan may be lean, to be built on over time; and,
- The four focus areas the City will start with are Employment, Service Delivery, Information and Communication, and Built Environment.

The Committee had the following comments on the presentation:

- Not everyone in the community is computer literate or has access to technology for use of websites like Be Heard or See Click Fix;
- One way to communicate with people not through a website is through residents' electric bill, which would underscore that this is a priority for the City; and,
- There are many different languages spoken in New West, which should be considered.

The Committee participated in a brainstorming exercise, responding to the following questions for each focus area:

- What are some barriers individuals experience within or when interacting with the City of New Westminster?
- Consider barriers that can be caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications, or technologies.

The following comments arose from the brainstorming discussion on Employment:

- People who are vision-impaired may need additional equipment or adaptations, like Braille display or the ability to speak instructions. Equipment is sometimes expensive, which can present a barrier;
- It is not easy to find information, like job postings and relevant contact information, on the City website;
- Because not everyone has access to the website, the information needs to be available in another way as well. The library, for example, would be a good place to display information for job-seekers;
- One significant barrier for job-seeking people with disabilities is fear: of being too old, not having the training, not being accepted, etc.;
- There may be funding available to help people with disabilities to access work equipment and adaptations;
- There is a lack of information on what organizations can support people with disabilities in their employment search;

- It needs to be explicitly stated *how* the employer can accommodate the needs of someone with disabilities, not just *that* they can;
- Disability Alliance BC offers guidelines for some, particularly low-cost, accommodations employers can offer—this would be useful to have on the City’s website;
- A position may be full-time, but the employer should demonstrate willingness to break that into part-time work so people with disabilities can do the work with adequate breaks;
- Stereotypes and stigma around having a disability, unconscious bias from employers, and lack of understanding are huge barriers. There is a perception that facilitating accommodations will be financially unreasonable;
- Most workplaces are built around an ableist philosophy;
- Employers should be encouraged to use plain language, particularly in instructions;
- Websites are not designed for people with visual disabilities or impairment;
- Socio-economic background presents an intersecting hurdle for people with disabilities;
- It is important for the employer to establish a safe space to disclose the accommodations the employee may need, particularly for people with invisible disabilities;
- Sometimes getting the job is the easy part, and keeping the job is most difficult. The employer needs to consider how far they are willing to go to help retain their employee;
- It is important to consider how good the health plan is for someone who has a disability, whether there are lines drawn between workplace accommodation and personal needs, and who is eligible for the health plan;
- In the onboarding process there needs to be an opportunity to identify their disability and request accommodation;
- Staff education is important; anyone who manages or works with someone needs to have, at minimum, a basic understanding of modern disability;
- There is a need to consider where disability fits within the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Reconciliation (DEIAR) framework;
- If there are jobs that a disabled person cannot do, there is a need to consider why that is and how that can be changed;

- Anti-stigma campaigns are not the same as solidarity. Anti-stigma campaigns often puts the onus on the individual who is stigmatized to resolve their own stigma;
- It should be examined whether there are people in the City playing a role they should be compensated for in the interest of disability justice;
- Prepare messaging to counter objections about the financial impact of accommodations—ask back, what is the *reward* of including people who need accommodations, not just the cost; and,
- Part of the emergency management plan needs to include people with disabilities, e.g. people in wheelchairs.

Procedural Note: Shannon Dolton left the meeting at 7:08 p.m.

The following comments arose from the brainstorming discussion on Service Delivery:

- It can be frustrating for the public to find the right person at the City to speak to, and when the right person is found, they do not always reply in a timely manner;
- In many instances, caretakers for people with disabilities have to provide authorization to speak on their behalf each time instead of having the authorization on file;
- There is a language list so people can receive service in different languages, but not a similar list for people who need accommodations in service delivery;
- There are not enough programs or fun activities for young people with disabilities; and,
- A phone line with captions for the hearing impaired might be helpful for people to learn what is going on without having to visit the website.

The following comments arose on the topic of Built Environment, which will be discussed at the next meeting:

- Designating sections of parking for people with disabilities would make a big difference for accessibility;
- High-density residential areas should have disabled parking spots; and,
- The use of disabled parking stalls is not well enforced.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

7. **END OF MEETING**

The meeting ended at 7:24 p.m.

8. **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

May 24

June 28

July 26

August 23

September 27

October 25

November 22

Certified correct,

Original Signed

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy

Original Signed

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk