

Accessibility Advisory Committee

MINUTES

Wednesday, June 28, 2023

Open to public attendance in Committee Room G

Lower Level, City Hall

Committee members may attend electronically

PRESENT:

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	Chair
Anne Bélanger	Committee Member
Karen Basran	Human Resources Business Partner
Taryn Bruckshaw	Committee Member
Shannon Dolton*	Committee Member
Hazel Fitzpatrick*	Committee Member
Nancy Kato	Committee Member
Vic Leach	Committee Member
Julia Schoennagel	Committee Member

REGRETS:

Iris Cheng	Committee Member
Wendy Parry	Committee Member

STAFF PRESENT:

Mike Anderson	Manager of Transportation
Hailey Finnigan	Communications Coordinator
Erica Mark*	Recreation Services and Facilities Manager
Carilyn Cook	Committee Clerk

*Denotes electronic attendance

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Councillor McEvoy opened the meeting at 5:31 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

Introductions took place.

3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

New Business items 7.1 – Accessible BC Act Session Hosted by Disability Alliance BC and Urban Matters and 7.2 – SPARC BC Grant Opportunity were added to the agenda by Karen Basran, Human Resources Partner.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 May 24, 2023

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Minutes of the May 24, 2023 Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted as circulated.

Carried.

All members present voted in favour of the motion.

5. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

5.1 Accessibility Focus Areas Summary

Karen Basran, Human Resources Business Partner, advised that staff are currently working on Accessibility Focus Areas Summaries which will be discussed at the next meeting. She noted that some of the issues that the Human Resources summary will address include:

- Interview questions will be provided to applicants in advance so that they can be better prepared;
- More inclusive verbiage in job postings; and
- Staff implementation of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism (DEIAR) Framework in city work and initiatives.

Councillor McEvoy requested that the topic of Universal Design be added to the next meeting agenda for discussion.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

6.1 Accessibility at the New Westminster Police Department

Hazel Fitzpatrick, Committee Member, shared that work is currently being done to make the New Westminster Police Department more accessible including, but not limited to:

- Facility tour, including the cell area, with Asifa Lalji, a local accessibility advocate;
- The website has been updated;
- Signage around the facility has been updated; and
- Review of procedures regarding interaction with people with disabilities.

6.2 Civil Volunteer Position at the New Westminster Police Department (NYPD)

Hazel Fitzpatrick, Committee Member, shared information about their volunteer position with the New Westminster Police Department noting that it came about as a result of a connection they made with a New Westminster Police Officer through another volunteer position they had. The Officer requested that they provide a speech at a fundraising event which opened the door for more opportunities, including connecting with Hailey Finnigan, the Communications Coordinator for the NYPD.

In response to questions from the Committee, they provided the following comments:

- Accommodations provided for the volunteer position includes a parking pass to park at the back of the Police Station along with police vehicles to allow for easier access to the building and use of a computer and trackball mouse;
- Ms. Finnigan acts as both a supervisor and mentor; and
- It is a very rewarding experience including learning how to communicate with the public professionally and effectively.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Finnigan advised that an assessment has not been done regarding Mx. Fitzpatrick's volunteer experience and that they are the first person in this role. Ms. Finnigan expressed her gratitude for Mx. Fitzpatrick's assistance and noted that, prior to taking the position, they were a Communications student at Douglas College making the position a natural fit.

Councillor McEvoy stated that it was mandated by the Provincial Government to have Police Department representative on the Committee. He asked Committee members if they had any comments regarding the NYPD and accessibility. In response, Committee members provided the following comments:

- It would be good to know the kind of training that Officers receive with respect to interacting with those with a disability such as during traffic stops and arrests;
- The intercom located at the top of the stairs at the Police Department is not accessible;
- The New Westminster Community Police Liaison Office, previously located at Sixth Street and Sixth Avenue is no longer there;
- The Police have a good program in place to report elder abuse and will attend situations in civilian clothes so that people do not feel intimidated;
- Police Officers should be aware that those with invisible disabilities may have anxiety as a result of their condition and may respond to things differently than expected; and
- A pilot program has been started in Vancouver that provides the Police emergency access to apartment buildings.

A Committee member shared details of a traumatic experience they had when they were in trouble and tried to access the Police Department after hours via the intercom located at the entrance to the NRPD. They noted that, through the intercom, they spoke with someone in another city who did not recognize that she was in distress.

In response to a question from a Committee member, Karen Basran, Human Resources Business Partner, advised that there are some Human Resources positions at the Police Department and that some city policies apply to all city staff while some are specific to the NRPD. She noted that work is being done on recruitment right now; however, there is also work to be done on policies and procedures;

In response to questions from the Committee, Hailey Finnigan, Communications Coordinator, New Westminster Police Department, provided the following comments:

- The Police Department is located in a heritage building that has two challenging entrances;
- Work is being done with Tobi May, Manager, Civic Buildings and Properties, and Angela Zhang, Facilities Management Coordinator, to make the elevator and intercom more accessible;

- On any given night, there are six to eight Police Officers responding to calls with few staff at the headquarters and this can be challenging;
- E-Comm can offer communication in more than 200 languages and there are between 15 and 20 different languages spoken by Officers at the NWPD;
- People with hearing loss can register with E-Comm to enable texting; however, it is unclear if this service is available to everyone with a disability. An update can be provided at an upcoming meeting;
- If frontline officers see an unhoused person who may benefit from resources, they will let Bylaw Officers know so that they can reach out to the person as the Police may be intimidating to some; and
- There is a city document that outlines nuisance behaviour and the roles of bylaws and police, etc.

A general discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following updates and comments:

- The Walkers' Caucus (WC) received a response from the Province's Accessibility Directorate (AD) regarding their request to create an accredited group that would ensure appropriately installed curb ramps, push buttons, etc., noting that the AD has indicated they will be focusing on employment and service delivery accessibility rather than road safety. It was announced that someone from the International Society for Wheelchair Professionals is working with the WC on this issue;
- Councillor McEvoy attended a conference last week with Mainland Community Services Society which addressed disability and racism;
- The Federal Government introduced Bill C-22 which aims to reduce poverty and support the financial security of disabled persons; and
- MOSAIC may be able to do some work with the Police Department regarding intersectionality.

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.1 Accessible BC Act Session Hosted by Disability Alliance BC and Urban Matters – Karen Basran, Human Resources Partner

Karen Basran, Human Resources Business Partner, shared an update on the Accessible BC Act session hosted by Disability Alliance BC and Urban Matters which she attended. She noted that:

- Mandated Accessibility Plans will address employment, the built environment, communications, and service delivery;
- The creation of a feedback mechanism, such as an email address for people to share their experiences and what may be missing from the community, is also a requirement that can be built upon in the future;
- The City is a bit ahead of other municipalities, some of which still do not have a committee created; and
- The suggestion is to start with a small plan and build on it and that communities work together to build their Plans.

Ms. Basran informed the Committee that she spoke with the Communications Department regarding the creation of an Accessibility Plan webpage and possible improvements to the City's website.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Basran provided the following comments:

- Staff are reviewing accessibility currently in place in various aspects of the city. The Parks and Recreation Department are already evaluating their facilities for accessibility;
- Funding is another part of the Plan that needs to be considered as the city has limited finances, and:
 - It is anticipated that the Province will provide some funding; and
 - The Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) has launched the Local Community Accessibility Grant Program which covers many different accessibility categories.
- At the next meeting the summaries will be discussed, including supporting all city departments in the work that they have already started and will begin;
- The DEIAR Framework is just one aspect that will be considered as the city needs to assess current resources, including funding, determine where to go from here, and ascertain what is available in terms of the challenging staffing situation the city is currently experiencing; and
- Input from the community must also be sought and it may be beneficial to connect with agencies to see what we can be doing differently.

Discussion ensued, and Committee members provided the following comments:

- In addition to an email address, information could be included with utility bills to reach those that may not use email; and
- We need to celebrate the successes and recognize what is working well as a way of acknowledging the hard work that has been done.

7.2 SPARC BC Grant Opportunity

This item was discussed under item 7.1.

8. END OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 6:43 p.m.

9. UPCOMING MEETINGS

July 26
August 23
September 27
October 25
November 22

Certified correct,

Original signed

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy

Original signed

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk