



Accessibility Advisory Committee

MINUTES

Wednesday, September 27, 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	Human Resources Business Partner
Anne Bélanger	Committee Member
Taryn Bruckshaw*	Committee Member
Iris Cheng*	Committee Member
Hazel Fitzpatrick*	Committee Member
Nancy Kato	Committee Member
Vic Leach	Committee Member
Karla Olson	Committee Member
Julia Schoennagel	Committee Member

REGRETS:

Shannon Dolton	Committee Member
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STAFF PRESENT:

Hailey Finnigan	Communications Coordinator, Office of the CAO
Christopher Koth	Manager of Programs and Community Development, Library
Erica Mark	Recreation Services and Facilities Manager Parks & Recreation
Jennifer Miller	Manager of Public Engagement
Katie Stobbart	Committee Clerk, Legislative Services

*Denotes virtual attendance

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Councillor McEvoy opened the meeting at 5:37 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**

3. **CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

The following items were added to the agenda:

- Item 4.3 – Recommendation on Transportation and Accessibility;
- Item 4.4 – Draft Principles; and
- Item 5.1 – BC Disability Caucus Post added by Anne Bélanger, Committee Member

4. **REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

4.1 **Brief Overview of the Community Advisory Assembly**

Jennifer Miller, Manager of Public Engagement, provided a brief overview of the new Community Advisory Assembly noting the following:

- The application period is now open with an online application form and a paper form soon to be available;
- The Assembly will be a pilot project for one year;
- The Assembly will meet monthly except in the summer months;
- There will be a focus on dialogue and participation with a consensus basis for decision-making;
- The aim is to have a group that will reflect the diversity of New West; and
- Supports are offered to participants including child or elder care, reimbursement of travel expenses, and a stipend for low-income individuals.

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

- The Assembly is anticipated to start meeting in early December or January;

- The City is actively starting the outreach process including reaching out to non-profits, the high school, and other direct outreach to encourage more engagement from diverse individuals;
- The meetings will be held in the evening and possibly on the weekend;
- People can sit on a committee or on the assembly but not both;
- The Citizen's Assembly model has been widely used, but this particular model, which includes focusing on more than one topic, is new;
- If there are vacancies in particular areas or demographics, staff will continue to do outreach following the deadline rather than fill seats with people who do not match the desired demographics; and
- Staff are working to share information in a variety of ways and are open to suggestion for other ways to reach out.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- The timeline for application for the assembly is not compatible with the timeline for application for the Accessibility Advisory Committee; and
- Being ineligible for the Assembly if one is sitting on the Accessibility Advisory Committee may be problematic if staff want to ensure representation of disabled individuals on the Assembly.

4.2 Draft Accessibility Plan

Karen Basran, Human Resources Business Partner, reviewed the draft Accessibility Plan and advised that:

- The plan is in its draft stages;
- Every three years the idea is to come up with a new plan to improve upon what the City is doing; and
- The plan will start with four of the eight focus areas.

In response to questions from Committee members, Ms. Basran advised that the desire in this process is less for consistency across municipalities and more for different municipalities trying different things and comparing notes to develop and improve.

Discussion ensued and Committee members provided the following comments:

- Committee members expressed concern with the fact that there will not be a consistent plan coming from the Province and that each municipality would be conducting their own distinct plan;
- Something missing from this plan and the website is the “truth” piece; used the good work the City is doing on Truth and Reconciliation as an example: there needs to be inclusion of the truth that people with disabilities have experienced systemic barriers and abuse. The plan needs to mention the people and the historic challenges that they have faced.

Committee members provided comments on each of the following aspects of the Plan:

Focus Areas

- The list needs to be in alphabetical order so as not to infer priorities, including a note that it is not in any particular order.

Built Environment

- Sustainable modes of transportation do not include accessible modes of transportation, for example people who need their cars because of their disability, and mobility devices;
- Provisions for accessible parking is not broad enough, and needs to include residential accessible parking for example;
- In the last line of the first paragraph of Wheelability Assessment Project, use “people who use mobility aids” not “reliant on”.

Procedural Note: At 6:48 p.m., Iris Cheng left the meeting.

Service Delivery

- Need to note how disability and accessibility are included in the Official Community Plan in the description;
- There needs to be better knowledge and communication about what is available in the City, for example the financial assistance available for programs;
- The Master Transportation Plan needs to include accessibility and support the idea that some people cannot get out of their cars;

- Under Financial Assistance, should say “New Westminster low-income residents” or “residents whose household income is below \$50,000” and include more clarity about eligibility details;
- Under Accessibility Features, the first sentence is untrue: there are parts of a few civic facilities and public spaces that are not accessible—it could say “many of our public city spaces... are accessible”;
- In the same section, instead of “accommodate wheelchairs”, “accommodate people who use wheelchairs and other mobility aids”;
- and
- Support the inclusion of details around the City’s audit of facilities and the replacement of aging infrastructure.

Information and Communications

- One thing to add to the list of ways to reach people is through their electric bill, which is more accessible than finding information online.

Employment

- One of the barriers for people with disabilities can be employment itself, so they may not have the same resumes as everyone else (for instance, having shorter-term or part-time employment experiences instead of a long-term full-time position)— it is not just a matter of education vs. experience but types of experiences;
- Discussed the alternate strategies for enhancing the recruitment process, in particular providing questions before the interview;
- In the “Adopting alternate strategies” section, should say that the strategies “may include” the list, not “such as”;
- Under Establishing Community Relationships, would like to see that the City, for these types of programs, will give preferential treatment to the most vulnerable in our community; and,
- In the section on Taleo, it needs to note that it is specific to the City of New Westminster and does not interface with other software or sites.

Moving Forward

- Consider adding the word creativity into this part of the plan—this work also requires applying creativity.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- It would be more concrete and accountable to explicitly say we are going to develop a workplan.

Item 4.3 Recommendation on Transportation and Accessibility

Councillor McEvoy noted that a subgroup of the committee met informally with Mike Anderson, Manager of Transportation, to discuss transportation and generate ideas for a more systemic approach to changes regarding transportation and accessibility.

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the committee recommends that the City review all transportation plans and actions, which includes existing and future mobility lanes, to ensure accessibility in all plans and projects related to transportation in a changing environment now and in the future. Such review shall consider the need for wheeled, pedestrian, bus and transit, and parking for people with disabilities, to provide easy access to destinations.

Carried.

All members present voted in in favour of the motion.

Item 4.4 Draft Principles

Staff would like feedback on the principles that were sent via email. Committee members requested that any requests for feedback come during committee time and not in committee members' spare time.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 BC Disability Caucus Post

Anne Belanger, Committee Member, made the committee aware of a post by BC Disability Caucus regarding the lack of the word "disability" on the City's accessibility website. Staff clarified that the word "disability" was used on the website, and acknowledged that there are differing feelings in the community about which words to use.

6. END OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 8:09 p.m.

7. **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

October 25

November 22

Certified correct,

Original Signed

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy

Original Signed

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk