

City of St. Catharines

Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility (MACOA)

**- non-quorum MINUTES -
Wednesday, February 24, 2010**

A non-quorum meeting of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility was held on Wednesday, February 24, 2010 at St. Catharines City Hall in Committee Room #1 at 1:30 p.m.

Present: Shelley Stewart, Co-chairperson
Sheryl Stewart, Co-chairperson
Diane Foster
David Reed
Frances Tanner
Mary Jane Waszynski

Regrets: Ian Crawford
Mary McKay
Fred Stevens
Andy Waldron

Staff/Guests: Diana Lecinski, Accessibility Coordinator, CAO's Office
Sue Dods, Corporate Support Services
Karen Ellison, Corporate Support Services
Ellen Savoia, Planning Services
Amanda Knutson, Planning Services
Steve Bittner, Transportation & Environmental Services

Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS): The FADS guideline was approved by the Region of Niagara in September 2005 and adopted by the City of St. Catharines Council on April 24, 2006 for use in municipal facilities.

1) Call to order:

Sheryl Stewart, co-chairperson called the non-quorum meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

2) Introductions:

MACOA members and staff reps were welcomed and round table introductions were made.

Shelley Stewart, co-chairperson (not chairing this meeting) asked for an opportunity to speak to the membership regarding the order of speakers. She asked that members wait their turn to speak and to do so through the chairperson. She reminded members that staff acknowledge speakers and keep track of who have indicated a desire to speak for the chairperson. In all fairness to those speakers who are waiting their turn, it is the job of the chairperson to sequence the speakers and keep the meeting agendas organized. Shelley Stewart thanked the members for respecting their co-members opportunity to speak by waiting their turn which helps the chairperson call upon the next speaker in an organized manner.

Sheryl Stewart acknowledged that staff had asked for an opportunity to provide an update to MACOA members at the beginning of the meeting. Diana Lecinski regrets to pass along a message from member Mary McKay that our newest member John McKay is ill and has resigned from MACOA. As well she notified MACOA that she will be regrets for some upcoming meetings. Andy Waldron also noted his regrets for upcoming meetings and that he may need to resign due to health.

2010 Insurance Coverage information was circulated to the membership.

3) Approval of Previous Minutes:

The minutes of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility for January 27, 2010, were not approved due to non-quorum, however they were supported by the members in attendance and will be brought forward to the next meeting.

4) Business Arising from Minutes:

a) Municipal Election Discussion:

Sue Dods, Acting Deputy Clerk and Karen Ellison, Elections Assistant informed MACOA that again, for the 2010 municipal election, MACOA's input is appreciated on the polling stations, alternative formats and general organization to ensure good accessibility. The municipal election date is Monday, October 25, 2010. Diana Lecinski has previously circulated a list (via email Feb. 22nd) of the 2006 municipal election ward polling stations and MACOA was asked for input on accessibility concerns at these locations. Several members did provide comment to staff regarding several locations. Having to use older and existing schools and churches does create accessibility concerns. City facilities tend to be more compliant with facility accessibility and good public access. As well, the City would like to provide advanced polls at multiple locations. Several possibilities were discussed and there was a clear consensus that the advanced polls need to provide excellent accessibility since not all the locations meet all the requirements and therefore may not provide the level of access that elections staff want which is another reason all municipalities promote the advanced polling stations as the most accessible venues. Sue Dods noted that accessible voting tabulators would provide for a broad range of disabilities. There are audio tabulators for vision disabilities, the devices can be hand-held. These devices provide audio instructions with options to speed, slow, advance or repeat instructions. They have paddles with large buttons (colour / shape / braille), can be hand-held or foot operated and also can tabulate from sip and puff assistive devices. The electronically printed ballot has random markings so that ballots are represented the same as everyone else so there is no differentiation. The ballots are printed directly into a secrecy folder and members commented that this all very inclusive. The municipal elections are being held earlier than usual to avoid potential bad weather and will be held prior to the time-change. The City has increased its promotion for the municipal election and asks that MACOA members share this election information with their colleagues and contacts. The City has a webpage dedicated to the elections. Staff have reviewed previous access concerns and media articles regarding election access. Particularly, a former member of MACOA experienced barriers at a polling station during the January 23, 2006 provincial election, and this was mentioned again as an example of planning ahead for access.

Sheryl Stewart thanked staff for their informative and proactive approach to the upcoming municipal elections. Members are reminded to continue to provide further input directly to elections staff or through Diana Lecinski. It was noted that all elections staff emails are included on the above-noted MACOA email of February 22nd.

b) Sidewalk Discussion:

Sheryl Stewart asked staff to provide a background and update regarding sidewalks. Diana Lecinski noted that previously (Sept. 2008 and again in Sept. 2009) MACOA had recorded within their Minutes a motion to support the inclusion of sidewalks in all developments, as property owners occasionally petition Council to remove sidewalks that are planned. Steve Bittner of TES and Ellen Savoia of Planning, both noted that MACOA's perspective on this issue is also important to an inclusive community. Ellen Savoia reviewed the sidewalk requirements within the existing Official Plan (OP) and the newly updated draft OP that is currently undergoing a public review. Steve Bittner also noted that installation of sidewalk sections to address missing links in existing sidewalk networks often meet opposition from area residents as well.

After some discussion MACOA asked that staff draft a sidewalk action statement to better demonstrate its position and more clearly support the necessity of sidewalk connectivity in the City. Diana Lecinski noted that she would draft a statement in conjunction with Planning staff to ensure a comprehensive statement is submitted to MACOA at the next meeting.

c) 2010 Accessibility Plan

The annual Accessibility Plan is scheduled for Council's agenda on March 1st. Thank you to volunteer presenters; Sheryl Stewart, Diane Foster and Frances Tanner who have been working as a team on the presentation. Shelley Stewart is unable to attend Council due to her schedule with Brock University's accessibility advisory committee. A staff report has been submitted and MACOA reps will be providing a presentation to Council along with a PowerPoint. MACOA has found a greater understanding and support of the Accessibility Plan by both Council and the community through these presentations. MACOA members are encouraged to tune in to view it on Cogeco Cable or attend the Council meeting itself.

d) Facility audit priorities:

This item was deferred to March's meeting. MACOA members are asked to be prepared to provide input on priorities relating to the facility accessibility audit. The facility audit list was distributed as further reference for members.

e) Updates:

i. EAF Progress

This project is complete and Diana Lecinski has submitted the necessary final documentation to the government of Canada along with a comprehensive before and after photo gallery.

ii. Site Plan Review

The new Aquatic/Library Centre was reviewed again from updated drawings. Amanda Knutson provided large scale drawings that were again recently updated for pedestrian pathways and will be reviewed further by staff shortly. Discussion focused mainly on safe pedestrian linkages through or around the parking lot and the need for more specific details on curb ramps at the entrance, at the accessible parking spaces and any other pathway links to Lester B. Pearson park. Planning Services has requested MACOA's site plan comments are appreciated on February 25, one day prior to the requested date due to timelines.

iii. DDRC

Frances Tanner continues to attend DDRC meetings and the most recent meeting focused on possible increased transit needs through local and GO transit, drawing people to the downtown and the design of the Carlisle Street parking garage as well.

5) Information Items:

- a) TES submitted a report to Council on February 1, 2010 regarding pedestrian safety concerns on Geneva Street at the Fairview Mall. As part of the discussion it became apparent that pedestrians also had safety concerns within the Fairview Mall property itself. As shopping centre interior pedestrian connections and safety is one of the areas that MACOA has voiced a concern about at various locations, Council added a

recommendation that staff discuss methods of improvement to Fairview Mall management. Staff have asked MACOA for their input and to submit suggestions to staff that can be incorporated into a submission. This can be done directly to Diana Lecinski or Steve Bittner and member's input will be taken at the next meeting as well.

6) Next Meeting:

Wednesday, March 24, 2010 in Committee Room #1 at 1:30 p.m.

7) Adjournment:

The meeting of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility was adjourned by the Chairperson, Sheryl Stewart at 3:35 p.m.