

City of St. Catharines

Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility (MACOA) MINUTES, Wednesday, June 27, 2012

A meeting of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility was held on Wednesday, June 27, 2012 at St. Catharines City Hall in Committee Room #1 at 1:30 p.m.

Present: Diane Foster, Co-chairperson
Shelley Stewart, Co-chairperson
Bob Asham
Tony DiPaola
Julie Morris
Linda Marie O'Hagan
Kevin Vallier
Mary Jane Waszynski

Regrets: Councillor Matthew Harris
Chantal Barrette
Ian Crawford
David Reed

Staff: Diana Lecinski, Accessibility Coordinator, CAO's Office
Steve Bittner, Transportation & Environmental Services
Chris Leonard, Fire Prevention, Fire & Emergency Management 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:

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

2. Introductions:

Everyone was welcomed and round table introductions were made.

3. Approval of Previous Minutes:

The minutes of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility for May 23, 2012 were approved.

Moved by: Diane Foster

Seconded by: Linda Marie O'Hagan

That the minutes of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility for May 23, 2012 be approved.

CARRIED

4. Presentation:

Chris Leonard of Fire Prevention provided information on emergency 911 texting. This emergency alternative to phoning 911 for people with a disability has been tested by the police services in Montreal, Peel, Toronto and Vancouver. Given its success to-date there is a report scheduled for the CRTC in July 2012 seeking approval for 911 texting. Currently people who phone 911 have their calls answered by the police and are then transferred to their choice of police, fire or ambulance. If phoning by TTY the NRPS does not redirect but liaises between the caller and those services. Once approved by the CRTC the police will be the first to initially implement the system followed by the other emergency services. However the new Fire Station #4 in Merritton, scheduled to open next year, where the city's fire dispatch center will be relocated and has been designed to accommodate this new emergency texting when approved and launched.

5. Business Arising from Minutes:

a. Accessibility Plan / AODA

Staff training – accessible information and communication

Further to the City's comprehensive hands-on training to over 100 staff at Brock University last December, subsequent training has just been completed for remaining staff who use computer documents. The secondary round of training took place in mid-June over 5 sessions. This training provided a background on the accessibility legislation, reviewed the City's requirements for uniform communication standards, and provided detailed step-by-step training on creating accessible Word documents, converting to accessible pdf's and scanning accessible documents. All remaining staff (staff who do not have a computer focused job; fire fighters for example) will receive supportive information about the City's accessible communication initiatives and obligations later in 2012.

Several key areas were identified to increase staff service knowledge and supportive information provided. Firstly the CNIB provided a demonstration to the primary group trained at Brock University of their 3 most common supportive technologies; JAWS is a screen reader (text to speech) mainly used by people who are blind, Zoom Text is a screen magnification technology used by people with low vision and Kurzweil follows visual highlights as text is read and often used by people who have difficulty reading and understanding text.

Information was also provided on communication with people who have a communication disability. For example, augmented and alternative communication might include speaking devices that a person types a message into to have read aloud, it may be a letter and/or picture board used to communicate a message.

b. Accessible on-street parking

Steve Bittner informed MACOA that the 2012 sidewalk work contract would be finalized at the beginning of July. A test site has been identified at the Knox church across the street from City Hall. As agree previously this on-street accessible parking location will be reviewed once finished by both staff and MACOA reps to ensure the accessibility concepts have been satisfied in the design. Staff will advise when this test-site has been completed and ready for review, before other spaces are built.

Steve Bittner noted that transportation also supports exceeding zoning ratios for accessible parking at the future spectator facility. He also responded to an earlier concern regarding bus stops being located close to on-street parking and that he will provide an update on shortly.

6. Updates:

a. Site Plan Review;

A letter c/o MACOA co-chairs, was dated and received today from the Brock University Accessibility Advisory Committee (BUAAC) noting concern about transit service to the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts (MIWSFPA). Staff read the letter to MACOA. Chris Leonard and Steve Bittner noted that there is emergency access to the MIWSFPA building entrance and that they understood para-transit service would be available. It was suggested that these concerns be follow up on and MACOA co-chairs will draft a response by the next meeting.

Moved by: Diane Foster

Seconded by: Julie Morris

That BUAAC's letter dated June 25th be received, explored and a response be made by the co-chairperson on behalf of MACOA.

CARRIED

b. DDRC;

Julie Morris, MACOA's DDRC rep reported that the DDRC continues to meet. That a civic area is identified and will be serviced with Wi-Fi by December 2012. Empty storefronts are being seen as an opportunity for promotional space and that the new PAC and spectator facilities will be instrumental towards revitalization of the downtown. Outdoor café spaces are desirable yet often constitute a barrier with narrowed sidewalks. Julie Morris noted that her role continues to advocate for barrier-free access. Members were concerned about competition for sidewalk space and the intended pedestrian use. MACOA asked that Julie Morris take the Sidewalk Action Statement, endorsed by Council on April 12, 2010, to an upcoming DDRC meeting.

Moved by: Kevin Vallier
Seconded by: Diane Foster

That the DDRC be made aware of and provided with MACOA's sidewalk action statement (endorsed by Council on April 12, 2010) and that the importance of pedestrian access be maintained as a priority in context with DDRC initiatives.

CARRIED

c. Parks and Trails – Access Audit update

Diane Foster and Julie Morris reported making a number of park audits further to the training parks. To-date the following parks have been audited for access; Catherine Street Park, St. Patrick's Park, Rennie Park, Lakeside Park and Jaycee Park. Walker's Creek Trail arrangements will be made by Julie Morris and Diane Foster. Both noted that other member's participation would be appreciated.

A number of questions arose as to MACOA's intended purpose and approach to this undertaking from a strategic viewpoint. Diana Lecinski noted that this undertaking was an initiative proposed by MACOA and that RCS staff attended a recent meeting to answer questions and provide guidance. It was suggested that Kristen Sullivan be invited back to the July meeting to provide supportive details that were not explored initially. There is a parks master plan and as noted at the project inception the access information gathered will help ensure that any reconstruction includes items that are flagged during this process.

7. Information Items:

- a. Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP); Diana Lecinski noted that St. Catharines hosted a full-day session to share the accessible information and communication training that has been undertaken in St. Catharines with her colleagues. Many accessibility representatives from various Ontario municipalities attended in person or via conference call.

Key note speaker was Barbara Collier, Executive Director of Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships-Canada, a national, non-profit organization that promotes communication accessibility for people who have significant communication disabilities. This was identified as an area that businesses in general do not have experience in providing good customer service due to lack of information and awareness.

- b. Kevin Vallier noted being at a recreation facility in Hamilton that provided an information board of the facility's accessible amenities. Diana Lecinski noted several years ago MACOA helped the City establish a similar list for its e-play system – it was to identify specific access attributes at recreation facilities. Members felt that more information is helpful and this concept should be renewed. Bob Asham noted that the Rick Hansen Foundation's Global Accessibility Map should also be used for this type of information. City facilities have been listed on there.

8. Next Meeting:

- a. Wednesday, July 25, 2012 at 1:30 p.m. in the Locke Room at the Kiwanis Aquatics and Library facility. Staff will arrange a tour of both the pool and library.

9. Adjournment:

The meeting of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility adjourned.

Moved by: Julie Morris
Seconded by: Tony DiPaola

That this meeting do now adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

CARRIED