

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Minutes

Wednesday, June 22, 2016

Burgoyne Woods Room at 1:30 p.m.

Attendance:

Diane Foster, Co-chairperson
Bob Asham
Steve Byers
Linda Marie O'Hagan
David Reed
Tracey Hrick
Mary Jane Waszynski

Absent:

Shelley Stewart, Co-chairperson
Ian Crawford
Stacey Headey-Komenda
Julie Morris

Staff Representatives:

CAO's office; Diana Lecinski
Mayor's office; Julie Rorison
TES; Christine Adams, Steve Bittner
PRCS; Rebecca Cann

1. **Call meeting to order**

Diane Foster called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.
Round-table introductions were made.

2. **Motion to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting**

Wednesday, May 25, 2016

Moved by: David Reed

Seconded by: Mary Jane Waszynski

That the Minutes of May 25, 2016 be approved.

CARRIED

3. **Presentations/Discussions:**

3.a. St. Catharines ~ A Compassionate City;

Julie Rorison, Executive Assistant to Mayor Sendzik provided an overview of St. Catharines' compassionate city model. She noted that care plus action supports a cultural shift to compassion. Many people who become marginalized find it difficult to re-engage into their community due to stigma. Some have invisible disabilities, some are homeless and many children are included in local poverty statistics. Engaging support organizations to help with viable solutions has been a good step forward. City staff are being engaged as ambassadors many of whom have visited areas and services that raise awareness, noting the importance of dignity and creating solutions. Homelessness and mental health issues remain of concern in Niagara. Groups like Start Me Up Niagara and Southridge Shelter are leading the way in connecting marginalized people to needed services.

Julie Rorison displayed the Compassionate City website that is linked to the City's website. She extended Mayor Sendzik's regrets as he is currently at the Regional Council meeting and was unable to attend this meeting.

Members of the AAC often state that disability is more than wheelchairs and ramps and that people with learning or mental health disabilities have a right to dignified opportunities too. Diane Foster thanked Julie Rorison for this information and staff will email the website and brochure links to the AAC.

3.b. Ontario Street ~ connected sidewalks update;

Steve Bittner updated the AAC on the status of missing sections sidewalks on the west side of Ontario Street. In particular between the QEW south to the former GM plant. The AAC continues to have concerns about lack of pedestrian crossings to access businesses on the west side of the street. Steve Bittner noted that the status is unchanged from when he last updated the AAC approximately 1.5 years ago. There is little to no road allowance on that side of the street and only when sites are redeveloped can Niagara Region make opportunity to create enough space for City sidewalks to be installed. Other opportunities may arise when utility poles, etc. are relocated, however this is a Regional roadway, and although the City is responsible for sidewalks, it is the Region that would need to obtain road widenings to accommodate the relocated utilities and / or future sidewalks. The AAC continues to feel that people with disabilities, and other pedestrians, are being prevented from accessing many businesses on the west side of Ontario Street and asked that City staff help convey this concern for pedestrian safety and the need for access in this area to the Region. Diane Foster thanked Steve Bittner for his update.

Moved by: David Reed
Seconded by: Linda Marie O'Hagan

That the City of St. Catharines Accessibility Advisory Committee requests connective and accessible sidewalks along the west side of Ontario Street between the QEW south to Carlton Street; and

That current access to sidewalks is limited or non-existent along Ontario Street which prevents pedestrians with a disability from crossing safely, accessing transit stops, or getting to many businesses along this stretch due to a lack of connective sidewalks; and

That Niagara Region be informed that adequate road allowance for a connective sidewalk placement in this area is a priority and important to people with disabilities in order to safely and inclusively visit this area of the City.

CARRIED

3.c. Welland Canal Fallen Workers Memorial;

Rebecca Cann, Cultural Services Supervisor provided a PowerPoint presentation of this memorial and history along with an overview of each slide to provide layout and design information of this memorial to the AAC. Accessibility has been a part of the design from the initial Request for Proposal (RFP) to a more final design currently. Accessibility staff was asked to review the RFP submissions for accessibility. The current design has more inclusive details as the design progresses.

The AAC supported the universal access into the Memorial, along with numerous elements that considered inclusive design. The slope is minimal being more ideal than FADS and there are flatter areas at the “gates” and at the reflecting wall. Sidewalks connect to parking and the Lock 3 Museum. There are several parking spaces in the adjacent St. Lawrence Seaway access driveway and when complete will have an accessible parking space. An audio tour guide system was discussed, being similar to the one available at the Museum and accessible print and website materials will be available. Diane Foster thanked Rebecca Cann for her informative presentation.

4. **Business arising from the minutes**

4.a.i **Accessibility Plan:**

As older adults are identified under the AAC’s terms of reference as a key stakeholder in accessibility issues, staff RSVP’d an information and display table for the St. Catharines Seniors Day on May 30. This was a large well-attended event with many displays, vendors and services taking part.

Thank you to Tracey Hrick for representing the AAC at this event. She noted that hand-outs at the AAC’s table included the latest accessibility plan, accessibility highlights and successes from last year, St. Catharines pads, pens and eyeglass lens cloths. Display boards had photos of Kiwanis Aquatics Centre and accessible parks. The display brought most of the 300+ attendees to visit the AAC table.

As suggested at the previous meeting, we asked the question of older adults about suggestions to make City services, facilities or programming more accessible and user-friendly for older adults. Many attendees filled out sheets with suggestions such as more pickleball programming. Comments were later distributed to related departments for information and follow up.

4.a.ii Staff training on accessible documents:

The City continues to provide bi-annual computer training on how to create accessible documents to its staff with a focus on newer employees who have started with the City in the past 2 years as well as offering a refresher to existing staff. Approximately 45 staff were trained over 4 sessions on creating documents in Word using the accessibility checker, creating PDF's and Adobe's checker. This on-going training helps to ensure that the City's documents are easily accessible by everyone and through various technologies, along with being closer to WCAG 2.0 AA website compliance.

Diana Lecinski also continues to identify and support training for front-line and key staff on effective and dignified communication with people who have a communication disability offered by Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC). After key staff have completed CDAC's on-line certification course the City will post their symbol at Citizen First on several other customer service counters throughout the City. City staff training has been recognized on CDAC's Facebook page.

4.b. Fort Erie's Accessibility is for Everyone

This event was held on Thursday, June 2nd, 10-3 at the Fort Erie Leisureplex and was attended by several AAC members and City staff. Key information, presentations and speakers included Alf Spencer, Director of the Accessibility Directorate, Jennifer Hoyle regarding Circle of Friends, screening of Talent Untapped and a Skype interview with creator/producer Anna-Karina Tabunar, live performance by the Basement Rockers, followed by 2 afternoon break-out sessions to gain input about the past 10 years of the ADOA, then and now.

Kudos to Fort Erie's AAC, Bev Bradman and other Fort Erie staff in hosting an excellent AODA 10th Anniversary event.

5. AAC Updates:

a) Site Plan;

No report

b) Community access and media;

Linda Marie O'Hagan provided numerous community and media updates to the members as FYI. Staff will forward links to the AAC following the meeting.

- St. Catharines Standard article by Linda Crabtree highlighting Shelley Stewart

c) City Projects, Christine Adams, TES;
Deferred

d) Other Business

- the City Clerk is seeking input and comments regarding the new processes, Handbook and reporting structure of all advisory committee members. Staff will follow up with an email request as FYI to those who are regrets for this meeting seeking feedback
- Congratulations to Linda Crabtree, former AAC member and long-time chair on receiving the Hon. David C. Onley Accessibility Award.
- Congratulations also to Communication Disabilities Access Canada for also receiving this award, as the co-chairpersons of the AAC authorized a letter of support on behalf of the AAC for this nomination.

6. Date of next meeting

The AAC determined that quorum wouldn't be attained at July's meeting and decided to cancel July 27 and no August meeting was schedule for 2016.

Moved by: Linda Marie O'Hagan
Seconded by: Steve Byers

That the AAC meeting for July 27th be cancelled.
CARRIED

Next Meeting:
Wednesday, September 28, 2016 at 1:30 p.m., Burgoyne Woods Room, City Hall

7. Motion to Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Moved by: Mary Jane Waszynski
Seconded by: Tracey Hrick

That this meeting is adjourned.
CARRIED