

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting 08-2021

Date: Thursday, October 14, 2021

Time: 1:00 P.M.

Virtual Location: MS Teams

Chair: Tessa Soderberg

MEMBERS

Tom Brownlee
Kai Crites
John Gobeil
Councillor Rebecca Johnson
Tara Lennox
Maurice Rubenick
Tessa Soderberg
Brian Spare
Randy Sponchia
J.R. Wheeler

SECTOR REPRESENTATIVE

Caregiver to a Person with a Disability
Mental Health Representative
Citizen Representative
Council Representative
Learning Disability Representative
Senior with a Disability Representative
Visually Impaired or Blind Representative
Hard of Hearing/Late Deafened Representative
Developmental Disability Representative
Brain Injury Representative

OFFICIALS

Krista Power
Dana Earle
Scott Garner
Flo-Ann Track

City Clerk
Deputy City Clerk
Municipal Accessibility Specialist
Council & Committee Clerk

RESOURCES

Jessy Bogacki
Carly Topozini
Matthew Miedema

Program Supervisor, Adult Fitness, Wellness & Inclusion Services
Classification Analyst, Human Resources & Corporate Safety
Project Engineer, Infrastructure & Operations

AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Tessa Soderberg called the meeting to order and a roundtable of introductions followed.

2. COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Chair Tessa Soderberg explained the communication process.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

MOVED BY: Rob Wheeler
SECONDED BY: Tara Lennox

WITH RESPECT to the October 14, 2021 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, we recommend that the Agenda as printed, including any additional information and new business, be confirmed.

CARRIED

4. PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Encampment Response Protocol

Coordinator - Thunder Bay Drug Strategy Cynthia Olsen appeared before the Committee via MS Teams, provided an overview and responded to questions relative to the above noted.

The following information was provided:

- At the onset of the pandemic the Vulnerable Populations COVID-19 Planning Table was established.
- The first priority was to understand the risks associated with COVID for individuals experiencing homelessness or non permanent housing.
- Stakeholders/Service Support Networks came together providing direct services to people experiencing homelessness, or providing specialized expertise on health and safety, weather, or funding to support the delivery of services to people experiencing homelessness.
- Illness and isolation shelter spaces were created in the community as well as a warming centre.
- The network shares information and the increased work around the vulnerable populations. Regular updates are provided to the Municipal Emergency Control Group on the status of COVID-19 among vulnerable populations and any risks or gaps that have been identified.
- In January 2021, Coordinator was contacted about an encampment, and the business wanted a compassionate response. Coordinator reached out to Network of outreach workers to engage individuals into finding alternative sheltering
- Since then, Coordinator continued to receive calls about encampment areas, and outreach workers provide a compassionate approach and response, interactions are respectful, compassionate and ensure each person's dignity and personal preferences are upheld.
- Moving forward, work is being done to develop a formal protocol for responding to encampments, including individuals who may be sleeping rough and who have disabilities.
- 15 – 20 organizations, to determine what programs or services will be provided by each.
- Communities across Canada have developed a protocols to identify and address the specific needs of individuals in encampments and link them with available services including individuals with disabilities.

- Several groups are already involved locally and the network continues to grow.
- The group will also continue to seek and act on opportunities to advocate for enhanced assistance for vulnerable people in the community. This includes pursuing provincial and federal funding to address the well-known gaps in supportive housing options in Thunder Bay.
- The number of individuals requiring support services has increased, COVID may have impacted this increase. While age range is typically 18 years and older, there are concerns about youth homelessness.
- Dennis Franklin Cromarty, Mattawa Education and Care Centre, and Keewaytinook Okimakinak each operate Safe Sobering Services for youth. Work on additional safe sobering site for youth has been stalled due to the pandemic.
- Facilities across Thunder Bay were assessed as optional shelter locations, most if not all would not meet the needs of sheltering. Partner organizations have stepped up to identify available space for this purpose. The Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board supported additional spaces during the pandemic. As capacity limits are expanding, based on COVID guidelines, shelters can operate closer to normal capacity limits.
- Community partners are currently looking for warming shelter options for the upcoming winter season. Through network outreach, individuals utilized the Care Bus for warming, and at times a nap. There was good ridership as people became aware the Care Bus was available.
- Rental/housing subsidies are provided through several support organizations. Individuals may be provided assistance/subsidies or connected to available services/resources based on unique circumstances.
- Individuals requiring accessible services/accommodations are matched with service/facility providers based on unique needs/circumstances.

4.2 Municipal Autism Strategy

Item deferred.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting 07-2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee, held on September 9, 2021, to be confirmed.

MOVED BY: Brian Spare
SECONDED BY: Kai Crites

THAT the Minutes of Meeting 07-2021 of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, held on September 9, 2021, be confirmed, as amended.

CARRIED

6. ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE

Municipal Accessibility Specialist Scott Garner provided an update relative to the above noted.

The following information was provided:

- Maverick Group will be producing two (2) videos. Video production will take place over the next few weeks.
- The launch of the Open House with all videos is scheduled for December 3, 2021.
- Videos will be available on Shaw, YouTube, Facebook and City of Thunder Bay website.

The meeting recessed at 2:00 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 2:15 p.m.

7. BUILT ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP UPDATE

7.1 Roundabout

At the September 9, 2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting discussion was held relative to the above noted and additional information was requested from the Project Engineer.

Project Engineer – Development & Emergency Services Matthew Miedema appeared before the Committee virtually via MS Teams and provided the following information

- Curvy paths or chicanes, which are back to back curves on the multi use trail, were installed to slow cyclists down
- A painted yellow line down the centre of the path, a tactile surface or tactile guiding edge are some options to be considered to provide guidance around the multi use trail There is currently no AODA standard specific to guiding tactile edges. Administration would like to continue discussions with the AAC to determine a suitable option.
- Contractors are required to fulfill the terms of a contract prior to receiving final payment, a standard practice. The build-up of concrete residue on the tactile plates will be removed.
- The centre mound height is intentional, designed to reduce sight lines for drivers, causing them to slow down.
- Plantings around the medicine wheel will be installed Spring 2022.
- Ramp access to the South-West corner is located on private property and is on the high end of the scale for slope requirements. The current location does not allow for a flatter slope so an alternate location will have to be determined. Engineering will consult with the property owner to determine a better location for the ramp.
- The pedestrian crossover signals utilize new technology and require software to program the audible messaging. The Traffic Technologist will update the audible message with the standard wording once the new software has been installed.

- Other municipalities have installed separate pedestrian and bike paths, it is currently not required at this location. Administration will continue to monitor the function of the multi use trail system around the City and upgrade as needed or as new standards require.

Discussion was held relative to the above noted and Matt Miedema responded to questions.

- During pre-consultation with the AAC, Members expressed concerns relating to the type and size of plantings at the roundabout location, specifically plantings that would create sound barriers for individuals utilizing traffic noise to navigate safely. At that time Administration advised that trees would line the outside of the path and low lying shrubs would line the inside of the path. Why have trees been planted on the inside of the path next to traffic lanes and can they be removed and transplanted elsewhere?
 - This question will be referred to Guy Walter, Landscape Architect for follow up.
- Although many stakeholder groups provided input for the roundabout project, Members noted that the safety of all stakeholders should be prioritized over design.
- Construction on Edward Street will be completed shortly, resulting in increased traffic through the roundabout. Will public service messaging be used to help mitigate vehicular accidents with pedestrians?
 - Vehicles are required to yield to pedestrians as per the Highway Traffic Act. Should an accident occur Administration will review the circumstances to advise future decisions, which is current practice
- Members expressed frustration with respect to time and energy invested in accessibility pre-consultation sessions and subsequent disappointment when the suggestions made have not been incorporated in completed projects.
- Curved paths do not provide a clear path, alternately speed bumps could be used on straight paths to slow bicycle traffic.
- A painted yellow line down the centre of the path would be helpful for sighted individuals.
- When using trails or sidewalks people typically travel on the right-hand side, to navigate the roundabout trail to the next pedestrian crossing there needs to be some type of mechanism that alerts an upcoming crossing.
- On Edward Street, where the audible pedestrian crossings are installed, a locator can be placed on the pole. Without audible signals on Redwood Avenue it will be challenging to navigate to the pedestrian crossing
- During a pre-consultation meeting with Administration the AAC recommended that audible crossings be installed on Redwood Avenue for safety and accessibility.
- The technology for pedestrian crossovers in Thunder Bay keeps changing, creating a learning curve and new issues for technologists to figure out extending the time to fix.
- The mound in the centre of the roundabout may help to reduce sightlines for drivers and calm traffic speeds but it also reduces the ability for drivers to see children accessing the roundabout and visa versa. The height of the mound also creates a barrier for deaf individuals that rely on clear sightlines to guide their travel. Adding planting to the mound will increase these risks.
- The slope of the ramp from the mall parking lot is too steep for individuals utilizing manual wheel chairs. The location and slope of the ramp should have been redesigned and reconstructed prior to joining it to the roundabout trail

- Engineering will consult with the property owner to determine a better location for the ramp, the slope will be addressed
- Traffic will increase through the roundabout once construction has been completed on either end of Edward Street, when will construction be completed?
 - Construction should be completed by the end of the month.

7.2 Fort William Gardens and Delaney Arenas

Deputy City Clerk Dana Earle provided the following for information:

Fort William Gardens:

- New scoreboard has been installed at the Fort William Gardens.
- The tender for the new handrails is being issued Saturday, October 16, 2021, and will be posted publicly for three weeks, closing on Tuesday, November 9.
- The handrails should be installed by the end of 2021.

Delaney Arena:

- The project had gone out to tender but has been put on hold.
- Original plan was to have this work completed through the winter months; however, the space is required this year for physical distancing.
- Funds have been committed and the project will move forward in April 2022.

8. ROUNDTABLE OF ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

Committee members reported on the following accessibility issues encountered in the community.

8.1 Tactile Plates

At the June 10, 2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee discussion was held relative to the above noted and a motion was passed recommending that the colour of new tactile plates be yellow beginning in the year 2022, that existing tactile plates be painted yellow and maintained as required on an annual basis, and that the Chair provide a memo at an upcoming Committee of the Whole meeting for Council's consideration.

At the July 19, 2021 Committee of the Whole Meeting correspondence dated June 16, 2021 from Chair – Accessibility Advisory Committee Tessa Soderberg was presented containing a recommendation to consider changing the City's current practice by installing yellow tactile plates at curb ramps and to paint all existing plates yellow.

At the August 13, 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting Memorandum from Councillor Rebecca Johnson dated August 24, 2021 containing a motion relative to the above noted was

passed directing Administration to implement a pilot project to test paint solutions for existing tactile indicators as well as new pre-manufactured yellow indicators.

Deputy City Clerk Dana Earle provided the following, for information:

- Painted and pre-manufactured yellow tactile plates are currently being piloted.
- The pilot project will take place over a few winter season from October 2021 – December 2023 to determine maintenance requirements.
- Members of the AAC to advise 2 locations to pilot new tactile plates.
- Administration to report back to Council prior to the 2024 construction season to provide results of the pilot project.
- Research has begun with respect to use in other municipalities and how to go forward with permanent solutions for the current patina coloured tactile plates already installed in Thunder Bay.

8.2 Closed Captioning

Discussion was held relative to the above noted.

- Closed captions generated by the MS Teams program is inaccurate
 - Are other options available?

Deputy City Clerk Dana Earle provided the following, for information:

- Closed captions provided within MS Teams are auto generated.
- Auto generated closed captions are not accurate as reported previously.
- While working through sound and technology issues at a recent virtual McKellar Ward Meeting, MS Teams auto generated closed captions were used, it was very inaccurate. As follow up Administration will reach out to Councillor Brian Hamilton provide information with respect to the ongoing work that is being done to find solutions.

Municipal Accessibility Specialist Scott Garner provided the following, for information

- Under the AODA there is no requirement for compliance to use closed captioning for live streaming.
- The AODA requires videos that are uploaded to the website to be captioned.
- Administration recognizes the importance of accurate closed captions and is continuing to work towards a solution.

8.3 Accessibility Consultation

A Member provided the following information:

Members have expressed their frustration with respect to recommendations the Committee has made to improve accessibility and safety during consultation with Administration and outside groups.

Discussion was held relative to the above noted.

- How can the Committee improve accessibility awareness and understanding across the Corporation and with outside consultant groups?
- How do we ensure that the Committees recommendations, with respect to the built environment and outside of Standards or Legislation, are understood and implemented?
 - Work continues and is ongoing with respect to accessibility training and improved understanding across all departments.

8.4 Accessible Parking

A Member provided the following information:

Accessible parking spots at St. Joseph's Care Group are limited and located down a hill from the main entrance creating barriers for individuals utilizing assistive devices/or limited mobility.

Discussion was held relative to the above noted.

- Does Security monitor the parking areas?
- Can By-law Enforcement get involved and ticket individuals utilizing accessible parking spaces without permits?
- Can a memo be sent from the Committee to the St. Joseph's Care Group to address the issue?
- Where are the accessible spots located and how many are available?
 - Administration will invite Supervisor – Parking Authority Jonathan Paske to the next meeting.

8.5 Canada Games Complex –Telephone Booking System

Program Supervisor - Adult Fitness, Wellness & Inclusion Services Jessy Bogacki provided information relative to the above noted and responded to questions.

The following was provided for information:

- The booking program used by Recreation & Culture is called Perfect Mind. It is utilized to maintain user information and has been in use prior to COVID 19. Perfect Mind is utilized for telephone and online bookings, will schedule 7 days in advance to allow people to book spaces. Administration cannot override the 7 day window for booking.

- Administration was unable to recreate the issue encountered with respect to individuals utilizing a telephone to book facility time. Members provided more information relating to the problem of using voiceover. The system needs to be voiceover compatible otherwise it is a barrier for individuals with no other option to book time at the facility. Administration will reach out to the program developer for more information
- The system was implemented to improve accessibility to programs and facility time during the pandemic, and was not intended to create additional barriers.
- Once COVID related restrictions are lifted the booking system will not be required.

9. NEW BUSINESS

10. 2021 MEETING SCHEDULE

At the January 14, 2021 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee it was the consensus of the Committee to schedule future monthly meetings from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, as follows:

Thursday, November 18, 2021

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.