



Minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee

Place: Council Chambers
Date: Monday, May 27, 2024
Presiding Officer: Danielle Laurie
Members present: Tracy Briggs, Danielle Laurie, Megan Marchant, Amanda Purdy, and Deputy Mayor Arnold MacDonald and Olivia Canning
Regrets: Mandy Blake, and Kirsten Hiltz

A quorum was present throughout the meeting.

Staff in attendance: Linda Cloney – CAO (recording secretary)

1. Call to Order / Welcome

Danielle Laurie called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM with round-table introductions and welcomes to all in attendance including Julie Glaser, Manager of Accessibility, Equity and Anti-Racism Program for Municipalities through AMANS via Zoom.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Deputy Mayor MacDonald and seconded by Olivia Canning that the agenda of the Accessibility Advisory Committee for May 27, 2024, be approved, as presented.

Motion Carried

3. Approval of the Previous Minutes – March 14, 2024

Approved by

Danielle Laurie, Chair, on May 27, 2024

4. Presentation – Julie Glaser – Municipal Accessibility Support Coordinator with the Association of Municipal Administrators, NS (AMANS) – The audit tool and its advantages.

4.1 – Audit Tool Handbook – handout provided

4.2 – Town Hall’s Audit – using the Audit Tool, submitted by Jo MacDonald – presented on the server

Julie Glaser reviewed with the Committee that when first started, challenges for municipalities facing the urgency of the 2030 deadline looming, municipalities did not all have equal access to tools and resources to have those accessibility audits completed especially when it was identified in their plans as a priority. An accessibility audit can be expensive. It's important to know what needs to be audited, what the measuring tools are, to identify where the problems are, what the solutions are, and then what those solutions are going to ultimately cost.

An interim audit tool was created and has since been removed.

Development of a new tool is in process. However, there is no timeline for the development. There was a lack of clarity on what an accessibility audit looked like and what items needed to be included in the audit to allow municipalities to be successful in making decisions and prioritizing projects for renovation if at all in those spaces.

Funding has been made available provincially and federally for renovations to make spaces more accessible. However, it required having the accessibility audit done first before the funding application could be made. This made it difficult to apply for funding for municipalities.

There are also many guidelines provided by many sources that are constantly updated including the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651-23, Rick Hansen Foundation Program, CNIB, and regulations under the

Nova Scotia Building Code Accessibility Code, section 3.8, and others. The process of identifying what is important for municipalities is difficult.

Julie Glaser reached out to Anne Sinclair, one of the leading experts in Canada in Accessibility for help. Anne assisted in creating a template tool for all municipalities to use. The template tool could be used with in-house expertise to audit the spaces. The tool can also be used with a hired consultant to analyze spaces identified by the municipality.

Julie discussed the audit tool handbook with the Accessibility Committee. The audit tool handbook will be revised each time a standard or regulation is updated. Julie discussed tools that could be used to prepare for and conduct the audit with the audit tool and her own experience with the built environment and how the audit is important for individuals with first-voice experience (for example, individuals with disabilities). Even something as simple as glazing and contrasting colours can be items that need to be identified in the audit.

Linda Cloney discussed that the Town of Oxford is looking to find out what mandatory and legal requirements must be met by 2030 in the audits. Julie advised that these are the items that everyone is waiting for and hopefully by the fall of 2024, these items of legal obligation will be made available. For now, best practices have been provided to help progress until the legal mandated requirements are known.

Julie reviewed with the Accessibility Committee the Accessibility Assessment Report / Audit Tool table of contents and sections to review in the Audit and some of the “easy wins” that can be achieved with the tool including signage and wayfinding. Several items in the tool do not require an expert to identify or assess.

Once the audit has been completed, the audit can be sent to a cost consultant for real-time cost estimates for the identified deficiencies.

5. Business

5.1 Letter of Resignation – Josephine MacDonald, Vice-Chair

Linda Cloney discussed with the committee that a letter of resignation was received by the Council by Josephine MacDonald indicating that she would like to resign from the Accessibility and Audit Committees. Josephine was very instrumental in getting the Accessibility Plan for the Town of Oxford going and was highly motivated.

The Accessibility Committee, through consensus, accepted with regret the resignation of Josephine MacDonald. Direction by the committee that Linda Cloney will draft a letter of acknowledgment and acceptance of Josephine's resignation.

5.2 Election for Vice-Chair, one-year term.

In a call for nominations, Deputy Mayor Arnold MacDonald nominated Oliva Canning as Vice-Chair for a one-year term commencing May 28, 2024. Hearing no opposition or further nominations after two additional calls for Vice-Chair, and accepting the nomination, Oliva Canning was elected Vice-Chair through acclamation.

5.3 Municipal Election – paper, electronic, or hybrid – discussion

The Alternative Voting Bylaw gives the Council the choice of how voting is to take place during a municipal election. All things are considered including cost, benefits, and disadvantages. The council voted in favour of a paper ballot election. The last few elections were fully electronic. One of the deciding factors then was due to COVID. There was considerable savings over electronic voting that was identified which was the biggest deciding factor by the Council. The concern, which was addressed in the resignation letter of Josephine MacDonald was that a paper ballot election is difficult concerning accessibility.

It was discussed that going hybrid would not be as expensive as previously thought and may in fact, be more successful than purely electronic or purely paper.

Deputy Mayor MacDonald discussed approaching the Council to consider a hybrid model for the 2024 Municipal Election.

Moved by Amanda Purdy and seconded by Megan Marchant to recommend to the Council of the Town of Oxford to reconsider the format for the municipal election and consider the hybrid model in the estimated cost of \$11,332.50 to allow everyone the opportunity to vote.

Motion Carried

5.4 Water Street crosswalk concern – discussion

The line of sight with the bridge hides the crosswalks on each side. Consideration for crosswalk-ahead signs and repainting of the crosswalks are being considered (repainting to occur the first week of June). Sidewalk repairs are also being considered. Future consideration is to move the crosswalks out and extend the sidewalk down to the ballpark which will help eliminate the slope.

Linda Cloney will investigate the possibility of adjusting the speed of the trunk roads (water and main street) for future consideration.

Moved by Deputy Mayor MacDonald and seconded by Amanda Purdy to recommend to Council to consider the purchase of amber lights at the Water Street bridge crossings.

Motion Carried

5.5 Outdoor Spaces – end of May / following audit tool understanding.

Outdoor space audits – should wait until further development of the tool is completed – possibly table in the fall.

5.6 “Walk and Wheelability” Oxford Event - update.

Linda Cloney discussed with the committee that the event was a success. There was a meeting held on May 29, 2024, to present the draft report that was compiled. A final report will then be drafted along with a video to present to the Council. This can then be used as a tool for the Accessibility Audits and applications to grants in the future.

6. Correspondence

6.1 Government Responds to Accessibility Act Review – handout (shared information previously on March 15) – *information purposes only.*

6.2 Breaking Barriers – Accessibility Directorate Updates – March 24 – handouts mentioned below (shared information previously on March 15)

6.2.1 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability – Nova Scotia Overview – *information purposes only.*

6.2.2 Accessibility First Voice Recruitment Poster – *information purposes only.*

7. Schedule the next meeting date

The committee discussed that some time to look at the audit tool and consider areas that should be reassessed is required. Also, collaboration with Julie Glaser for the next meeting to audit a building should be considered. The committee discussed scheduling a tentative date in June.

A tentative date of June 25, 2024, at 6:00 PM to review the Oxford Theatre with the audit tool kit was selected by the Accessibility Committee.

The Terms of Reference were also reviewed due to the vacancy of Jo MacDonald. It was determined that the committee falls within the Terms of Reference for committee members.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:33 PM

Maurice
Danielle Laurie, Chair

Linda Cloney
Linda Cloney, Recording Secretary

Oct 28, 2024.
Date Approved

