

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 7, 2022 @ 2:30 PM

Council Chambers, Admin building & Zoom online

Minutes

Present:

Councillor Ralph Gidney, Chair,
Councillor Vicki Amirault,
Wayne Huskins,
Janine Stewart
Tyler Roy, online
Mike MacLeod, Director Planning, RQM
Elise Johnston, Accessibility Coordinator, RQM
Corina Huphman ASL interpreter from Society for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Regrets: Mackenzie Colp, Kelly Oxner.

1.0 Call to Order 2:34 pm

2.0 Changes/Approval Of Agenda

It was moved by Mike and seconded by Wayne that the Agenda be approved as circulated. MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

3.0 Approval Of Minutes of February 3, 2022

It was moved by Vicki and seconded by Janine that the Minutes be approved as circulated. MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

4.0 Presentations: None

5.0 Planning:

5.1 How to offer more to the public as a resource in all categories?

o Built Environment:

- Word of mouth is spreading within communities. I was asked to visit a church in Mill Village and the Westfield

Community Hall both regarding new ramped access as well as Zion Church on Main Street for a new business that will need much help with accessibility there.

- Update on our Adaptable Housing flyers is that they are now printed and available online as well. Wayne said the digital pdf version was screen readable.
- Employment:
 - Elise met with NS Inclusive Employment Collaborators led by a local group Distinctability and Halifax-based Inclusion NS; good networking but city-centered whereas we look for rural relevance and partners.
 - The South Queens Chamber of Commerce will host a Job Fair in May, and happily are including Department of Community Services and Employment Solutions Services to underline the various supports like wage subsidies, coaching, grants, etc. available. Elise is invited to share the Region's resources in terms of Inclusive Employment practices. Ideally some activities can be encouraged to solicit participation, an example might be a walking interview for people that are uncomfortable with eye contact. A great opportunity to contact local businesses.
 - Elise will speak at a training program on Apr 13th, organized by Employment Solutions Services (Opportunities Fund sponsored) on the legal Duty to Accommodate and Disability Disclosure issues. A small group of job seekers from Queens and Lunenburg will learn what, how and why they can ask for supports that lead to success in the workplace. Lots to talk about and very case specific.

Vicki asked about the *legal duty to disclose*. Elise explained that one is not required to disclose diagnoses but should describe one's needs as it pertains to the job. The less visible the impairment and more expensive the request, the more likely the Employer will want to see something from a Doctor. Again, the doctor's note would emphasize the adaptations needed, not any private details as to label of disability.

The Duty to Accommodate is up until "Undue Hardship" which can be calculated based on size of employer and profits. The employee must be reasonable and collaborative in the

process. Confidentiality is of utmost importance as negative stigma is strong. Goal is to build a relationship and trust between employer and employee for mutual benefit.

Statistics show that accommodations really aren't expensive, but include such things as changing lighting, seating or standing, allowing for more frequent micro-breaks, being located near a washroom, etc. One example given was someone's need to visit a pharmacy every other Tuesday morning for meds that would improve job function. Elise will share her presentation with the committee.

- Our member Tyler sits on the provincial Standards Development committee, and can share insights.

The **Employment standards** are in the early stages and sits in as first voice, mostly listening to the group. Tyler shared the file and Elise read out some of the draft outline of focus areas. That file was later shared to the group by email. Some content included:

Career planning, coaching and accessing job searches;

transitioning from high school is a big one; mentoring;

Recruitment, interview process, hiring and onboarding all

need to be inclusive with accommodations; Job

application tools, policies, fair equivalents; safe practices around disclosure;

Training, retention and advancement; on-the-job training for employees with disabilities, performance management, accessible opportunities, management processes for accommodation as they can adapt over time.

Leadership development, job carving/creation and Job development, trying to be creative in matching the tasks to the person according to their strengths and abilities; meaningful work.

Psychological safety.

Employment supports, fair pay, total compensation, a

minimum living wage (which are 2 different things:

minimum wage is not necessarily a living wage). Identity and removal of economic disincentives to work benefits and sick pay flexibility, return to work processes.

All looks good and will help us refine our municipal plan in this category which was missing standards.

- Education:

- Elise participated in provincial working group on draft Standards Development, phase 1, as well as on the committee for the South Shore Regional Centre for Education. Similar draft outlines are being circulated for feedback. Schools are grouped by age and private or public. They all have to look at all the Accessibility categories too, so they Built Environment, Information, Services, Employment, etc. These can be shared as well.

An interesting side point was that one particular private school felt that the requirements were too much and would shut down some schools. Most of us felt that services like ASL and assistive devices were an obvious need, but could see that high-ticket items like elevators in older buildings would be a challenge. Consensus was that this needs to be done and the province is supporting the long term process.

- Community Outreach:
 - Elise is working on a new grant for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion from the provincial SportFund. The application will be to develop activities for people with disabilities through primarily Coach training as that is currently a great need. Some equipment purchases will be included as well as financial supports for promotions, transportation and venue rental. School teams are often led by parents who don't have inclusion training. Partnering with the schools, local sports teams, QASL and Special Olympics, the aim is to strengthen awareness and participation in various physical programs. Meanwhile any misconceptions about Special Olympics like competition-driven or Down Syndrome-focused could be broken. Liverpool High School is enjoying 'Unified Sports' in which mixed abilities play together.
 - Elise sat at the Library for a public session period on March 30. Unfortunately almost no one passed through, but the librarians were interested in the mini ellipticals! It's good to have us posted on their events page and posted on the bulletin anyways. The next one is in an evening, late April;
 - Elise joined the NS Health Authority's Continuing Care Team on April 6th to discuss community links, using existing groups and volunteers to help bridge gaps in support. It

was a small group but good discussions with our new mpal Kim Halliday joining as well. The idea is that when a patient phases out of medical support, local organizations could be helpful in keeping them participating in society. Still in beginning discussions.

6.0 REPORTS/UPDATES

- 6.1 Universally Designed Playpark work started on site! Tenders for impact-absorbing surfacing were being developed and furniture and accessories being selected. Delays mean the play structure won't open until the Fall but the splashpad may be able to operate by mid-summer.
- 6.2 Recap of current projects:
 - 6.2.1 The chair lift to Astor stage is in place, awaiting electrical part. Two Drama leads, Kallie Kalliatosis and Ashley Goodwin are keen to use it in their forthcoming productions. Conversations on authenticity in terms of acting out roles with disabilities can occur. We are still awaiting assistive devices. The ramped entry that was on hold due to delayed grant responses will move ahead this year. A first meeting with Directors and CAO to consider the pros and cons of different locations will take place on site on Apr 4th. Elise expects to open up to users prior to investing.
 - 6.2.2 Queens Place front doors now have sensor openers and upstairs power doors. Tyler is thrilled about these as it allows independence for him. Elise admitted that while she could see that the exterior bench was too close for access to the sensor, she didn't notice that a large bin and shovel blocked the interior button. Proves point for lived experience input! Even management is happy as it means the buttons aren't being whacked by heavy hockey bags. The upstairs doors received push buttons as well; hopefully power has been connected by now.

30 handrails being manufactured, to be installed along the top few rows of seating.
 - 6.2.3 Community Health Board Wellness Grants – scheduling sessions for both Hobbies and Elliptical exercise had been delayed for usual restrictions but hopefully

opening up with warmer weather too; surprisingly slow response from target groups like the Seniors going to the Lions Club and the Manor's visits to Queens Place. Feel free to share the program with anyone interested.

6.3 Input from around the table:

- Janine wants an opportunity to voice her opinion on the location of the ramp. She'd seen guys measuring on site and wonders if she needs to write to Councilors about it. Elise confirms that with the Act, the committee and her role, users will be consulted. Janine says most ramps are too steep, turning radius is too tight and also curious about Elevator location. She herself has been and will be again in a wheelchair and finds that with feet sticking out in front, even ramps were not suited. She is concerned that shoveling would supersede a decision on this.
- Wayne doesn't think there's enough money in the world to make everything accessible! In Caledonia, walking is deadly, especially in the winter. Icy slopes are treacherous, no sidewalks on the highway, poorly designed curbs at a diagonal to intersections are dangerous to anyone with low vision or in a wheelchair. Elise asked about tactile indicators at intersections. Wayne feels that in the winter with big boots and packed snow, they wouldn't be effective. Also there can be a 6 inch difference between the road and the shoulder so one's feet aren't level. He also jokes about how he finds a button on a post for traffic stops.
- Recognizing that existing codes and standards may not have been 'meaningful accessibility', and now we are looking for independent and comfortable access. The current mantra is "Nothing for us without us" and at least all committees are now mandated to have lived experience. In fact, Canada's first chief accessibility officer is Stephanie Cadieux, who represented Surrey South as the first woman with a disability to serve in the BC legislature and in cabinet.

7.0 The next meeting set for May 5th, 2:30, location to be determined.
Adjournment at 3:20 pm