

**Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, November 19, 2020 @ 2:30 P.M.**

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Ralph Gidney, Chairperson
David Rudderham, Vice Chairperson
Councillor Vicki Amirault
Wayne Huskins
Kelly Oxner
Tyler Roy
Elise Johnston, Accessibility Coordinator, Region of Queens
Mike MacLeod, Director of Planning and Development, Region of Queens

This is the first meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, on Zoom, recorded and available at <https://youtu.be/QOzIYMdl7uc>

The meeting was chaired by Elise Johnston.

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 P.M.

The meeting was generally a meet and greet with introduction of committee members.

Tyler Roy – is an individual with cerebral palsy who uses a wheelchair and a head/mouth-controlled joystick. He attended NSCC in 2018. His main concerns are the limitations of transportation with regards to Taxi Services and Queens County Transit (hours and amount notice required that prevents spontaneity). He is also concerned with the sidewalks from the town over the bridge to Queens Place for persons in a wheelchair.

Dave Rudderham – has been 54 years in a wheelchair as a result of a spinal cord injury. His main concern is mobility. His background includes Wheelchair

Athlete; Computer Programming, System Analysis and Oceanography Research with the Bedford Institute of Oceanography. Another concern is accessibility from all points of view, including hidden disabilities and the associated costs of assistive devices.

Vicky Amirault – is Councillor for district 4 and currently feels disabled due to hip replacement and sees accessibility in a new light. A main concern is the poorly designed “accessible” parking in town, which are too narrow or have no access to the sidewalk. She loves being on the committee and to be part of finding solutions.

Wayne Huskins – was partially sighted until 35 and is now totally blind. His background includes working for Revenue Canada with respect to employment equity and has experience with blind and visibility-impaired disability issues as well as somewhat familiar with other issues of the disabled. He hopes to help move things forward in Queens County and would like to see a higher visibility of the disabled. He feels that the disabled seem to be at the bottom of everything and referenced Covid-19 support where the disabled had to wait until November for their minimal financial assistance. He states that the disabled are Low Profile in the Big Scheme of Things and would like that changed. Wayne demonstrated to Richard Lane, Community Economic Development, how the screen reader JAWS navigates the Municipality’s new web site, which was useful.

Kelly Oxner – is the manager of Penny Lane Enterprises Woodworking. She is a teacher by trade and provides educational employment and life skills to individuals with disabilities. Her main goal is to educate the employers in the town on accessible employment, to bring down barriers for the disabled and increase the hiring of people with disabilities.

Ralph Gidney – is a father of disabled son and is excited to be part of this committee. With so many different things to look at, he looks forward to doing whatever we can by working together.

Mike MacLeod – Director of Planning and Development. His background is in land use planning and not necessarily accessibility issues but he looks forward to learning from those with experience. He agrees that change and improvements are overdue and is happy to work towards the betterment of the community. He spoke briefly on the new Municipal Strategy that allows for accessory and secondary dwellings on a property. This is a good step towards supporting

extended family members' independent living when some assistance is still required, an aging grandparent or adult child with cognitive impairments for example.

A side note about the limits of what municipalities can do and what is provincial jurisdiction was touched on.

Elise Johnston - has a background as an architect, turned health coach which shifted into job coaching with NSWorks where she had good experience with people with invisible disabilities, helping them bridge into employment. Her son is 13 and on the autism spectrum so has had a lot of interaction on the education side of cognitive disabilities. With the range of perspective and enjoying continual learning, she wants to connect the dots. She will be behind the scenes doing research as to best practices and grant opportunities while the committee's job is to help prioritize action plans. She spoke briefly about accessibility survey that was made public in September and received almost 100 responses, half of whom identify as having a disability. She asks for input, questions, comments, ideas

Discussions

Dave R brought up affordable accessibility in this county with high levels of poverty. Elise has seen that personal grants are tiered to income such that lower income families receive more financial aid. Dave laments that his tax dollars of a lifetime of employment goes to say a college kid who hasn't worked yet, while he dips into his RRSP for regular living expenses. "Total Inequity". Wayne: It's very expensive to be disabled and it isn't addressed enough at all levels.

Elise says that we'll work on what we can at the Municipal level, and then she'll try to connect to provincial and federal levels or at least broader groups and advocates. It was agreed that the Council would have to lobby the levels of government and use resources like MLA Kim Masland.

Reviewed and discussed the 6 Categories of Accessibility.

It was agreed that multiple formats allow everyone to access the documents easily.

Reviewed and discussed the existing Policy #87 "Recreation For All", how it is a big step for accessibility and that it tells Council to allocate funds over time towards improvement of facilities, programs and services (for recreation).

Tyler and Dave gave some details on the 'accessible' equipment at Queens Place. The O.T. at the Queens General Hospital can demonstrate a pulley

system. Elise emphasizes this is why we need input from those with the experience! Provincial mantra is “Nothing for us without us”.

Discussed Implementing the Accessibility Plan and asked questions for our consideration:

How will we assess these moves?

How will we monitor their effectiveness? Do we get less complaints and more participation?

How do we reach out to people and get messages out? Dave suggests podcasts, the way that LITF & CHB are doing. Elise did have a podcast interview with Community Health Board and will pursue this direction but also wants non-digital.

Kelly says what's worked well for her, are private FB groups and online sessions can have question and answer for a specific invitees which feels safe and intimate. Recordings make it available to those without internet. Elise agrees and also would like to see some stories made public to increase awareness of struggles, be they financial, physical or other.

Affordable accessible housing is a major problem and needs addressing. David mentioned a few venues and apartments that are neither accessible nor affordable. He keeps his eye on new construction.

Meetings will be held the 1st Thursday of each month at 3:00 P.M.

An **agenda** will be sent out prior to each meeting.

Meeting adjourned 4:01 P.M.