

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, September 9, 2021 @ 2:00 PM

Zoom meeting

Minutes

Present:

Councillor Vicki Amirault,
Wayne Huskins,
Tyler Roy,
Mackenzie Colp, guest with Amanda Gallant, ASL interpreter,
Elise Johnston, Accessibility Coordinator, Region of Queens,
Mike MacLeod, Director of Planning and Development, Region of
Queens.

Regrets: Councillor Ralph Gidney, Chairperson; Kelly Oxner,

1.0 Call to Order

By Vicki at 2:05 pm

2.0 Changes/Approval Of Agenda

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

3.0 Approval Of Minutes of May 13th, 2021

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

4.0 Presentations: Guest Mackenzie Colp welcomed as potential committee member. A young woman out of NSCC, with Charge Syndrome and is deaf. Amanda Gallant joined as ASL interpreter (in fact Mackenzie's support through school).

She mentioned that with impaired balance, she'd appreciate more benches around, including Pine Grove Park. She also mentioned that visual fire alarms are critical for the deaf, especially when in isolated areas such as washrooms. She would love assistive devices

for [closed captions](#) at the Astor. (Elise confirmed that all of these are in our municipal plan and should not be so hard to do).

She and Wayne had different experiences with integrate and segregated schooling systems which led to interesting discussions of pros and cons. One wants peers and teachers to relate to and learn from while being able to navigate amongst hearing or sighted gatherings.

Finally, Mackenzie “loves Facebook” and is able to engage in broader society with this tool. Tyler agreed whereas Wayne doesn’t use or have the need to use it.

5.0 Planning:

- 5.1 Outreach and Communications continue with Eric for Diversity and Inclusion Awareness. In person visits to businesses and organizations, plus QCCR to start.

Information flyers with business cards are being distributed in Queens to share municipal roles and connect to grant resources. The aim is to follow up with presentations and/or training, possibly starting with a Speaker Series through the local Chamber of Commerce. Discussions have started towards recognizing businesses that have improved awareness and made steps to be inclusive.

The radio show on QCCR will start soon, with recorded sessions available online. Relevant topics will be highlighted and community members, both with a disability and those supporting employment for example, will be invited to share their experiences.

- 5.2 Brainstorm Diversity in Employment initiatives

Starting with the municipality and extending to private sector, Eric and Elise are looking at policies and whether recruitment practices are as accessible as they can be. Emphasis is on offering alternative formats and the possibility of accommodations.

Request for Proposals also need to include social procurement, recognizing the value of businesses that support diversity inclusion. We know that these are not purely ethical decisions but economic ones, and need others to feel that broader benefit.

She met with Pete Bennet, 'DistinctAbility', who is working on Neurodiversity in the Workplace training and promoting an app that supports people with high anxiety navigate their day. Meanwhile, there are a number of existing employment incentives from the province that can be accessed through NS Works, Department of Community Affairs and NSCC. Elise is pushing for staff meetings to find tangible steps to be taken in October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

6.0 REPORTS/UPDATES

6.1 Community Health Board grant sessions started. Aim to capitalize on engagement for building community.

While participation numbers have not been high, those who came, fully enjoyed and appreciated the program. Elise briefly described what's happened to date and will follow up with a report after the last one. Some target audience are still feeling vulnerable or happy at home. There will likely be some leftover funds that could rollover into more sessions.

6.2 Status of grants and implications to proposed renovations and purchases. Mobi mats ordered finally!

Unfortunately, the federal 'Healthy Communities Initiative' grant response has been pushed to after the election. This effectively holds up forward movement on current spending as our municipal dollars are to be contributions against grant monies. Invoices are ready for certain items to be purchased, such as assistive devices and a lift to the stage.

The mobi mats will go in as soon as possible at Beach Meadows.

6.3 New AAC member application

The only new application comes from Janine Stewart, a 30-year Queens resident who has had multiple surgeries on her legs due to bone cancer. Having been in wheelchairs a few times and very active in various community groups, she's keen to help our committee improve accessibility in Queens. Her name will be put to Council for approval.

Mackenzie confirmed that her original application could be reconsidered, and her name will be put forth to fill the other vacant seat of this committee.

6.4 Any other business, concerns, priorities?

Wayne talked about a Self-defense course for the blind that he'd taken and whether there was anything like that around. Elise did a quick search and there was nothing in NS.

Mackenzie agreed that she would like to have some training as she feels vulnerable not hearing what's happening behind her. She asked what training the local RCMP had with regards to people with disabilities. Elise will contact RJ Duffney, the Community Constable.

Vicki asked about a bench at the end of the river-side boardwalk at Beach Meadows Beach. This should be easily accommodated, as Scott Orme, Public Works told Elise he had some lumber for more picnic tables. She will make a request.

7.0 Adjournment at 3:15 pm.

Next one for Thursday, **October 14th**, in Caledonia at the Hub.