

WEST HANTS MUNICIPALITY
Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda
December 15, 2022, 6:00 p.m.
Community Room, West Hants Sports Complex
16 Centennial Drive, Windsor, NS

Agenda is subject to changes up to and including during the meeting

This meeting will not be livestreamed



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1. Call to Order
 2. Attendance / Introduction of New Members and Staff Support
 3. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
 4. Announcements
 5. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2022
 6. New Business
 - a) Election of Chair and Vice-Chair (Terms of Reference attached)
 - b) Review Summary of Proposed Actions 2022-23 (based on breakout exercise and discussion at Oct. 20/22 AAC Meeting, **reference pages 4 – 11 of the attached meeting minutes**)
 - c) Nova Scotia Accessibility Act / WHRM Accessibility Plan - Definition of Disability
 - d) West Hants Sports Complex Through the Accessibility Lens (Kathy Kehoe, Kevin Bennett)
 - i. Success stories
 - ii. Work to be done
 - iii. Employee perspective / constructive feedback
 - iv. User perspective / constructive feedback
 7. Complex Tour and Experiential Activities
 8. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment

Social Time!

1. Call to Order – CAO Phillips called the meeting to order at 5:58 p.m.

2. Attendance / Introduction of New Members and Staff Support
Voting:
Michel Bourgeois, Resident Member Jennifer Davison, Resident Member
Kelly Ann Jobson, Resident Member Denise Long, Resident Member
Roseanna Boyd, Resident Member Jordan Stephens, Resident Member
Bob Morton, Councillor, District 6
Staff Support:
Mark Phillips, CAO Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk
Tina McKay, Building and Fire Official Troy Burgess, Manager, Public Works Operations
Kathy Kehoe, Director, Community Kevin Bennett, Manager, Parks and Recreation
Development Facilities
Kathy Johnston-Isenor, Manager, Sara LeBlanc, Community Recreation Coordinator
Recreation and Community Engagement
Carmen Dewar-Miller, Admin Assistant, Kiya McDow, Recreation Staff
Financial Services
Special Guest: Justin Stephens, On-Ice Sledge Demonstrator

3. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
MOVED by Resident Members Bourgeois and Long that the meeting agenda be approved.
Motion Carried.

4. Announcements – None

5. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2022
MOVED by Resident Members Davison and Bourgeois that the meeting minutes be approved.
Motion Carried.

6. New Business
 - a) Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Committee members elected Councillor B. Morton as Committee Chair and Resident Member Davison as Vice-Chair.

At this point, committee members moved to the public skate area of the Sports Complex for an on-ice sledge demonstration by Justin Stephens.

- b) Review Summary of Proposed Actions 2022-23 (based on breakout exercise and discussion at Oct. 20/22 AAC Meeting, **reference pages 4 – 11 of the attached meeting minutes**)

CAO Phillips reviewed this document, highlighting more immediate achievables within each of the six key focus areas. Once the Municipality hires a new Active Living Coordinator, this staff resource will be utilized to support accessibility (and related) initiatives.

Under Awareness

- “Engage and collaborate with local disability stakeholder groups to gather insight and lived experiences.” This could involve a presentation or site tour (New Boundaries or other organizations where daily engagement is key).
- “Provide accessible and inclusive workplace training for Council, senior leadership and key staff members.” Human rights training is one example. Training for staff who collaborate closely with persons with disabilities. Give direction to staff and Council to complete this training by a targeted date.

Under Built Environment

- “By 2024, evaluate and prioritize retrofits to existing municipal buildings and facilities to meet, at minimum, the accessibility requirements in the latest version of the Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations.” Meet standards (i.e. a quiet room at the Sports Complex). Report going to Council, trying to utilize existing funding for acoustic paneling. Per Staff Member Bennett, the Sports Complex is too loud. Typical for this type of building. Cites similar complex at Membertou – they added sound baffles and paneling to mitigate the noise. It has made a significant difference. There are people who cannot come to the sports complex due to the noise / echo. There is a plan in place to address next year by installing fixed ceiling panels and cylindrical sound baffles (approximately two hundred). Examples of other concepts include quiet area for nursing mothers, sensory issues, neurodivergent, children with additional needs. Currently working with a portable sensory area, utilizing change rooms. We need to bring items to this committee for endorsement and leadership. Then bring them to Council.
- “Initiate accessibility audits at key facilities.” A budget related item – identify a budget for this.

- “Establishment of a municipal grant program to financially support small businesses completing accessibility improvement projects.” We do not have the standards yet. The provincial government is enabling municipalities to provide grants for these improvements, such as a façade program. Consider putting something aside for this purpose (grants, funding).
- Regarding sidewalks, we do have the new road standard. New roads build in growth centers will require sidewalks.

Under Employment

- “Require Council and all municipal staff to complete the Working with Abilities online training provided free of cost by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission.” This is achievable in the short term.
- “Undertake an anonymous survey to establish a baseline employee demographic and track the number of employees with disabilities, both diagnosed and self-identifying, with the intention of reflecting the diversity of the Municipality in the municipal workforce.” Do we know our people? Information that could improve the workplace. Mention of the lack of an elevator at 76 Morison Drive. 100 King Street has an elevator. There is a small working group tasked with coming back to Council with an RFP to evaluate both buildings. The workplace needs to be accessible, currently not ideal.

Under Programs and Services

- “Increase recreation program offerings to provide equitable opportunities for people with disabilities to participate.” There are opportunities for videos, success stories and testimonials. We have tools to communicate. Staff Member Johnson-Isenor acknowledges that with programming they still have a huge amount of work to do. They took the first step towards a big win today, working with the Valley Chapter of Autism Nova Scotia to support our autism community in camps being offered. Our youth leaders do not have the training required for this. Inspire West Hants is an initiative started to share all the impressive things happening in West Hants currently. Cites the example of videoing Justin’s sledge demo for sharing through IWH social media.
- “Train staff in the safe and proper use of adaptive recreation equipment. We do an excellent job training staff currently. Staff will demonstrate this training during the walkabout.
- “Support the continued growth of the adaptive equipment loan program by growing the inventory and providing recreation staff with the training necessary for proper equipment use.” This is a budget item. This has been supported but the committee needs to continue to emphasize these needs.

Under Information and Communications

- “Ensure the Municipality’s website and any downloadable content meet the latest WCGA guidelines.” The municipal website is a key communication piece. A revamped, accessible website will be endorsed to Council again in the new year.

Under Transportation

- “Consider the needs of people with disabilities when exploring the feasibility of any future public transit services.”
- “Initiate a public transit feasibility study to investigate appropriate transit models for a municipally operated transit service.” This is required to review needs related to public transit. Community Health conducted a survey. Over five hundred participated. Kings Transit has had a recent change in leadership, we are waiting to hear back from them regarding a route proposal. The survey did ask questions regarding connectivity between the Valley and HRM. This direction offers some challenges.
- “Improve lighting on the municipal road and trail network.” There is an appetite for this from the community and developers. More of a structured system / development process. Lights are integrated into development; The Crossing is a model for this. Would lights be area-rated? NSP or decorative? Developer responsibility. An item that could come back to the committee.

The above are all action items to push, vet and endorse through this committee. Per Councillor B. Morton, these endorsements hold weight, coming from the community.

- c) Nova Scotia Accessibility Act / WHRM Accessibility Plan - Definition of Disability
CAO Phillips reviewed this definition prior to the committee’s tour of the Sports Complex.
- d) West Hants Sports Complex Through the Accessibility Lens / Complex Tour and Experiential Activities (Kathy Kehoe, Kevin Bennett, Kathy Johnston-Isenor, Sara LeBlanc, Kiya McDow)
Staff from the Community Development Department, led by Director Kehoe, took Committee Members on a comprehensive tour of the West Hants Sports Complex. Through this tour, with focus on accessibility, the committee got a sense of the facility’s success stories, work still needing to be done, employee and user perspective as well as constructive feedback.

The tour started at the front entrance and progressed through the building, covering both floors (lobby area, change rooms, washrooms, elevator, stairs, walking track, warming room, arena seating, field house, field house seating area, Community Room).

Information, impressions and takeaways from the tour:

- The complex was built with an accessible intent.
- User friendly with room for improvement, easy wins.
- The front doors are wide sliders, offering easy access.
- Resident Member Stephens noted that the lip on the metal door frame was too high. You need strength to wheel over it. Also a bit of a tripping hazard.
- The plexiglass at the welcome desk makes it difficult for people to hear each other. This was not part of the original design, added as COVID precaution.
- There was a box of copy paper under the lower, more accessible window at the welcome desk. Besides blocking access, it was also a tripping hazard. The box was subsequently moved.
- Signs throughout the complex are large, with large font, braille and visual cues / icons.
- Water fountains include sensors.
- Washrooms are accessible.
- Access to the field house is tough in a wheelchair, it takes effort to get on to the turf area.
- The ice viewing area on the main level is not accessible for anyone in a wheelchair.
- The soap dispensers in the washrooms are not placed with accessibility in mind.
- They do offer wireless debit.
- The elevator is a big win.
- Two accessible change rooms. Per Resident Member Stephens, “not bad.”
- Put something on shower seat and floor for grip.
- Another stand bar would be good.
- The shower head does slide down.
- Clothing hooks in the changing rooms are too high.
- Consider a cutout in the bench seats for a wheelchair or walker.
- More of a visual cue would be beneficial for the fire alarm.
- The phone charging station was set too high.
- For the walking track, there is a wheelchair available, as well as a rollator and walking poles.
- From the warming room on the second level, viewing is good but sound is an issue. There is a bad echo around the track area.
- With regard to the wheelchair viewing area, the handrail is directly at eye level. One solution would be to take the railing out of that area. Another would be to redo the wheelchair viewing area at the top of the main seating section by taking out the standing rail and top row of seats.

- Per Resident Member Stephens, would prefer mid-ice viewing over the current corner (blind spots).
- In the turf viewing area, the automatic door initially would not work.
- The door switch is too high for someone in a wheelchair to reset, it is not easy to call for assistance.
- Install a bumper in front of wheelchair viewing spot.
- There were garbage cans in front of the door sensor.
- Automatic door needs to be stronger, faster.
- Of the two entrances to the area, only one door is automatic.
- Community Development staff discussed the availability of trekking poles, ice grips and an adult tricycle available through the Municipality's free equipment loan program.
- A tour of one of the upper-level washrooms was next. The soap dispenser was not reachable for Resident Member Stephens. Should be on side wall or hand-held capability.
- One sink should be lower.
- There was an issue with pulling into the bathroom counter and hitting plumbing underneath.
- The mirror tilted forward which was a win.
- There is no yellow caution paint on the main stairs. Other areas are marked.

The group moved back down to the main level and into the field house / turf area. Community Development staff gave demos for the polar skis, adaptable polar stroller and Hippocampe with adaptable seats and other accessories (seasonal / terrain specific wheels). All of this equipment is available through the free equipment loan program. Staff are working towards a more accessible programming guide as well. Comments are welcome!

The group returned to the Community Room for a round table wrap-up. Everyone is learning more by being visually shown. There are many easy fixes. Educating people on the "little things." Gratitude was expressed for Resident Member Stephens' observations. They were teachable moments. Committee members are seeing the wins, seeing the areas to improve. Possibly bringing more accessibility awareness to municipal OH&S Committee. (This was in reference to currently having only one accessible exit from field house viewing room.) There is a lot that can be done. Excitement that people are learning and working towards more accessible facilities.

Cannot say enough about staff cooperation and efforts. So much can be accomplished by a group of like-minded people, great discussions and brainstorming. There is a need to reteach and relearn how we see our world.

We have looked from a physical mobility standpoint, what about other disabilities? Committee members can email Carmen with any additional observations.

7. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment – The next meeting will tentatively be scheduled for February (pending the hiring of a new Active Living Coordinator).

MOVED by CAO Phillips and Resident Member Davison that the meeting be adjourned.

Motion Carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

X

Committee Chair