

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda - AMENDED
June 15 29, 2023, 6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers, 76 Morison Drive, Windsor, NS
Agenda is subject to changes up to and including during the meeting
This meeting is open to the public and will be livestreamed on Facebook



1. Call to Order
2. Introduction of WHRM Active Living Coordinator, Kevin Waters / Round Table Introductions – Councillor B. Morton, Committee Chair
3. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
4. Announcements
5. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – December 15, 2022
6. Unfinished Business
 - a) Update on West Hants Sports Complex Accessibility Features
 - b) Review of Green Action Items from the Accessibility Plan
 - i. Reviewing the impact of green action items
 - ii. Prioritizing items to be completed
7. New Business
8. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment



Present

Michel Bourgeois, Resident Member	Jennifer Davison, Resident Member
Kelly Ann Jobson, Resident Member	Roseanna Boyd, Resident Member
Bob Morton, Councillor, District 6	Kevin Waters, Active Living Coordinator
Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk	Tina McKay, Building and Fire Official
Kathy Johnston-Isenor, Manager, Recreation and Community Development	Carmen Dewar-Miller, Admin Assistant

1. Call to Order – Councillor B. Morton called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.
2. Introduction of WHRM Active Living Coordinator, Kevin Waters / Round Table Introductions – Councillor B. Morton, Committee Chair
Councillor B. Morton provided the committee with some highlights from Staff Member Waters’s background. Staff Member Waters then took some time to introduce himself. Round table introductions were also made.
3. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
Moved by Resident Members Davison and Bourgeois that the agenda be approved.
Motion Carried.
4. Announcements – Councillor B. Morton acknowledged that we are in Mi’kma’ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq People and that this land is governed by the treaties of Peace and Friendship signed in 1726. West Hants Regional Municipality also recognizes that we are all treaty people and have responsibilities to this land and each other.
5. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – December 15, 2022
Moved by Staff Members Johnston-Isenor and Waters that the December 15, 2022, meeting minutes be approved.
Motion Carried.
6. Unfinished Business
 - a) Update on West Hants Sports Complex Accessibility Features – Kathy Johnson-Isenor, Manager of Recreation and Community Engagement

Staff Member Johnson-Isenor advised the committee that acoustic panels for the rink side of the complex have been ordered. Installation is expected to be complete by the end of 2023. These panels will make a noticeable difference in noise levels. (Towards the end of the meeting Staff Member Johnston-Isenor received confirmation that a total of 117 panels are to be installed in the rink, community room and warming room.)

b) Review of Green Action Items from the Accessibility Plan – Kevin Waters, Active Living Coordinator

Staff Member Waters took some time to review and prioritize items to be completed under the six identified areas of focus.

Awareness

- Demonstrate inclusivity in municipal publications and communication material.
 - Staff members stated that there had been a recent push to improve inclusivity in our publications and communication materials. Committee members agreed.
- Actively work to increase the representation of people with disabilities on all municipal committees by extending invitations to disability support networks and groups.
 - Staff Member Waters would love to have someone else on board. Resident Member Boyd volunteered to be another stakeholder at the table for those discussions to ensure everyone’s voice is heard.
- Regularly promoting the accessibility plan and actions completed to improve accessibility. What are our current practices?
 - Staff are definitely open to hearing more feedback. They generally advertise and promote and always bring this plan to the work they are doing. Can share with committees such as Active Transportation, other community partners. Let the community know through social media, videos, community events.
 - The challenges include getting the word out to the right crowd. How else can we reach out?
 - Facebook is all-reaching. The newsletter might be an option. Promote wins such as the piece of sidewalk built to make the causeway trail more accessible. We need to let the public know about these improvements. The Town of Middleton’s website was cited - it features a page dedicated to accessibility.

- Physical copies of the plan can easily be made available.
- Provide accessible and inclusive workplace training for Council, senior leadership and key staff members.
 - We need to ensure front-line / summer staff are included. Staff Member Waters has provided training to current summer staff.
 - More training for Council is welcome.
 - Free training opportunities (webinars) are offered through organizations such as Rick Hansen, Parasport and various Coaching Associations. These can be shared.
 - If there was a web page set up, these links could be shared there.
 - Staff are looking at a few pieces of our website currently, can work to increase awareness in the next two months.
- Build strategies to support people with disabilities to participate on municipal committees.
 - The Municipality recently posted for an HR Manager position. This new hire will be focused on diversity, inclusion, accessibility and associated staff training opportunities.

Built Environment

- Initiate accessibility audits at key facilities.
 - We can continue to hold meetings at other facilities around West Hants, do the walk-throughs.
 - An audit of the sports complex was completed.
 - It was beneficial to have Jordan there, see things from his perspective
 - We could meet at one of our trails or open spaces. Possibly schedule a field trip as part of every second meeting.
 - Meet at locations outside of Windsor area such as community halls. Invite the public to attend (current practice).
- Ensure that any proposed changes to the built environment are reviewed by the AAC.
 - This is a priority for the committee.
 - No upcoming projects that anyone was aware of.
 - Staff Member Johnston-Isenor -important part here, we are making accessibility a priority. Consulting folks like Staff Member Waters when new projects are being worked on, ensuring that lens is applied.

- Commit a portion of the annual budget to go toward the installations and maintenance required for improving the accessibility of public buildings and public spaces.
 - Efforts made at the sports complex (sound baffles).
 - Recently at 76 Morison work site, a staff member was moved to a more accessible position at the front counter – lower counter access for staff member and for customers.
 - More of a focus when creating the annual municipal budget.
 - As capital projects move forward, we need to hardwire accessibility into the procurement process. Meet the standard set. Get to a place where West Hants are initiators and not adapters.
- Support local businesses in making accessibility improvements by promoting the provincial ACCESS-Ability Grant Program and providing resources for other funding opportunities.
 - We don't have access to the information on who may have received a grant. There has been work around town but no confirmation that it is connected to this grant. We can continue to focus on promotion.
- Installing visual or vibration-based smoke alarms in municipal buildings
 - This has not been done yet but is a great idea.

It was noted that the key action item under Built Environment was initiating the audits (facilities / open spaces).

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 training has been completed by all staff including new staff.
 - This training has sparked a lot of conversation among staff.
- 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.
 - This has not been completed. JOSH (Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee) is looking at this on a smaller scale / different perspective. Their focus is on mental health.
 - It can be proposed that JOSH kick-start this initiative.

- Assign designated liaisons to serve as the main point of contact for accessibility matters within each department.
 - This item is regarded as falling under JOSH as well. Is there an ability to develop that wing of the safety committee?
 - JOSH has capacity. Over and above, staff can go to their manager or department head to address immediate needs.
- Establish a centralized accommodation fund to pay for assistive technology, devices and accommodations for employees.
 - We can look into the liaisons to carry forward with this task.
 - To some degree this is already being done. There is never any question to implement and accommodate if a need is identified. May require the fund to be more formalized.
 - Sounds like it's being taken care of now. Let's not overcomplicate.
 - Staff Member Snair will confirm and follow up with an email.

Programs and Services (Lot of top priorities in this category)

- Provide annual accessibility and inclusion customer service training for new and existing customer service, sports complex, aquatic centre, and recreation programming staff.
 - This would be much the same training the summer staff received.
 - Doing a decent job of this with Community Development staff.
 - Need to have larger conversations with other departments and offer that training to them.
 - Staff Member Waters can offer training. He created a training program that could be delivered to a larger audience.
- Introduce the use of assessment of accessibility impact as a part of staff reports to Council.
 - This has been identified and can be pushed ahead.
 - We can assess what we can move forward with. We don't have to solve all the problems today.
 - When we have presenters at Council, accommodations are made as required.
 - HRM's staff reports include a line item for an accessibility component. Not applicable to all reports, but there is an accessibility piece. Could be an opportunity for the committee to have input.
 - This is doable.

- Meeting agendas and minutes are posted online. A hard copy would be available if requested.
- The Comms Team is always reviewing documents using a standard of accessibility. Community feedback is welcome, please reach out to staff.
- The minutes from Accessibility Committee meetings are posted online.
- Meetings livestreamed on Facebook are close captioned but not always accurately. Unsure as to how to address this.
- Undertake a review of recreation programming to identify barriers to participation, feasible adaptations to eliminate barriers, and / or new inclusive programming opportunities.
 - Community Development staff engage the community and create opportunities where they didn't exist before. For every program or event, they are continuously looking at how to break down barriers – financial, accessibility, etc.
 - Staff Member Waters is looking at redeveloping the Active Living Strategy (they would love to hear from the community).
 - Staff are actively setting up engagement sessions through the summer, community socials, getting out to the rural communities
 - Working with community partners
 - Developed and launched Inspire Fund to assist community members who are struggling with cost / accessibility to local recreation programs.
 - Apply for funding. Community Development offered a program called “Adaptive Try-It” through Sport Nova Scotia. There were some challenges, mostly environmental (lack of snow). We have been given an extension, there will be focus on accessibility.
 - Community consultation is coming soon.
- Train staff in the safe and proper use of adaptive recreation equipment.
 - This has been discussed as a group. Possibly use some videos to promote and train.
 - Very rarely does the adaptive equipment on hand get used. The municipality wants to purchase equipment that folks can use. Needs to be promoted.

- Prioritize snow clearance on sidewalks and crosswalks and provide training to plow operators to increase awareness about maintaining barrier-free access.
 - Councillor B. Morton noted that a good job was done this year.
 - At HRM, when snow removal went to contract, staff met with contracted foremen to review expectations for snow clearing such as no backfill on crosswalk.
 - We can highlight this to revisit at next meeting.
- Investigate opportunities for partnerships with local organizations with expertise in adaptive sport and recreation to support the development of adaptive sports programming.
 - This is currently being done and continues to grow.

Information and Communication

- Establish a dedicated stream of communication for accessibility-related information. This information should be available in digital and print formats.
 - Using Word instead of a PDF allows for headers to be highlighted. Anyone using an e-reader can jump from report to report. We can look to slowly move toward that.
 - With reference to the Town of Middleton website barrier-free page as something we might be able to do. Improve rather than recreate the wheel.
- Train relevant staff in the use of plain language and accessible document formatting.
 - Staff Member Waters touches on plain language in the training he delivers. This can be added into in-house training.
 - Document formatting should be consistent across the board.
- Create modified version of key municipal documents and resources such as forms, bills and statements, and brochures in accessible formats. Accessible formats should include at minimum large print, plain language and screen reader compatible digital communications.
 - Some documents are moving toward this. We don't have that standard as of yet in West Hants. As we strive to meet one point, we are touching on multiple points. Adopt the principals of large print, etc.

- Staff Member Snair has printed minutes and reports with larger font and bolding. If the request is there, we do whatever we can.
- Would love to hear from people with suggestions on being more accessible.
- Develop an accessible signage and wayfinding toolkit to support people with vision or hearing impairments.
 - Definitely a challenging one.
 - Agreement that this is something the rail trail committee could look into
- Create promotional material to build awareness of adaptive recreation and inclusive programming. This could include video content and print material.
 - This is something we do very well, especially video content.
 - Staff are always looking to improve.
 - For anyone who has seen the videos, what can be improved?
 - The sound quality. Community Development just got new mics.
 - No need for big, flashy videos.

Transportation

- Prioritize the implementation of the Active Transportation (AT) Plan.
 - Staff love doing that.
 - There is an AT Committee that meets on a regular basis. Staff Member Waters oversees that committee.
 - AT is working on a plan in partnership with Cycle Nova Scotia to make Windsor more active transportation friendly.
 - There is currently a survey out related to this partnership. We invite all to give feedback through this survey. The results will inform future work and help create a safe active transportation community.
 - The Blue Route (for bicycles) on either side of Windsor needs to flow through the community safely.
 - Can we explore inclusion of AT trail / sidewalk on any new road upgrades?
 - Through AT, we meet with the province and Public Works to get a heads-up on these road projects. TMP connector road was cited as an example - needs widened shoulders. High priority.
- Initiate a public transit feasibility study to investigate appropriate transit models for a municipally operated transit service.

- There is currently a broader body looking at this. Council has met with them during their last meeting. In the very preliminary stages. Council talks a great deal about transit and will continue to work with this group.
- Prioritize support for West Hants Dial-A-Ride, to help them expand their service offerings.
 - Dial-A-Ride are identified as a line item within the budget and receive financial support from Council.
- Actively promote and increase awareness of community-based transportation providers including West Hants Dial-A-Ride and the Windsor Senior Citizens' Bus Society (WSCBS).
 - This is an opportunity for us. For two seasons we have been taking a Community Development approach when creating our seasonal recreation programming guides. Looking at helping other recreation providers and not-for-profits. We have a whole page dedicated to community-type information, could extend space as required to bus society (already working with Dial-A-Ride).
 - What services do these two organizations provide?
 - Dial-A-Ride assists with drives for residents with transportation barriers (groceries, work, medical appointments, etc.).
 - More information to be provided on the WSCBS at the next meeting.
 - We do not currently promote these services on our website.
 - A new web page will make that achievable. Good place to promote these services, taking that community development approach.
- Prioritize AT facilities in the asset management plan.
- Improve lighting on the municipal road and trail network.
 - A few years back lighting was improved on the causeway trail. After highway construction is complete, these lights will be reactivated.
 - Council has requested information as to where on municipal roads streetlights could be added. No timeline for this as of yet.
 - Staff are working on that policy; Staff Member Snair has seen a rough draft.

At this point Staff Member Waters gave the floor to the committee to prioritize.

- Some of the communication pieces should be prioritized. Other municipalities were cited such as the Town of Kentville. They use a large electronic sign to provide Council updates to residents.

- There was a question about the proposed sidewalk from New Boundaries on Centennial Drive to the sports complex. Councillor B. Morton has presented this to Council. In the works but there is no update yet.
- Upcoming community socials and the new community events trailer were mentioned. The trailer's decals, provided by Repracorp, represent our diverse and inclusive community.

7. Next Meeting Date / Adjournment – tentative for September. Terms of Reference to be sent out in advance of this meeting for review and suggested revisions.

Moved by Staff Member Johnson-Isenor and Resident Member Bourgeois that the meeting be adjourned.

Motion Carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:09 p.m.