

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda - AMENDED
November 23, 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. It will not be livestreamed on Facebook



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1. Call to Order
 2. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
 3. Announcements
 4. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – September 21, 2023
 5. Unfinished Business
 - a) Provincial Built Environment Accessibility Standard Package (Draft) Feedback Follow-up
 - b) Terms of Reference Draft Revisions
 - c) New Sports Complex Exercise Equipment Video – Updated and Posted
 6. New Business
 - a) Active Living Strategy Partner Engagement
 - b) Facilities Update
 - c) Fireworks
 - d) Front Counter Accessibility, 76 Morison Drive**
 - e) Next Walkthrough Location
 7. Next Meeting Date / Meeting Adjournment

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
November 23, 2023, 6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers, 76 Morison Drive, Windsor, NS



Present

Michel Bourgeois, Resident Member	Jennifer Davison, Resident Member
Kelly Ann Jobson, Resident Member	Roseanna Boyd, Resident Member
Denise Long, Resident Member	Kevin Waters, Active Living Coordinator
Sarah Taylor, HR Specialist	Jordan Stephens, Resident Member
Tina McKay, Building & Fire Official	Carmen Dewar-Miller, Admin Assistant

Regrets from Councillor B. Morton, Staff Members Burgess, Snair and Phillips

1. Call to Order – Vice-Chair Davison called the meeting to order at 5:58 p.m. Sarah Taylor, the new HR Specialist for West Hants Regional Municipality was welcomed to the committee. Round table introductions were made.

2. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions - **AMENDED**
Staff Member Waters requested an amendment to the agenda to include an email request received from WHRM staff member Jenny LaPierre, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee review the modifications made to the front counter at 76 Morison Drive as they relate to accessibility. This item was added to New Business as 6. d).

Moved by Resident Members Jobson and Bourgeois that the **AMENDED agenda be approved.**
Motion Carried.

3. Announcements – Vice-Chair Davison 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.

4. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – September 21, 2023
Moved by Staff Member Waters and Resident Member Boyd that the September 21 meeting minutes be approved.
Motion Carried.

5. Unfinished Business
a) Provincial Built Environment Accessibility Standard Package (Draft) Feedback Follow-up

Staff Member Waters advised that that all committee feedback from the September meeting was compiled and sent to the province. Resident Member Bourgeois' additional feedback was sent along as part of the Annapolis Valley Accessibility Committee's submission. Staff Member Waters is hoping to see this feedback show up as part of the general standards soon but was not sure of the timeline.

b) Terms of Reference (TOR) Draft Revisions

Staff Member Waters brought forward the revised/amended TOR for one last review. The committee decided to make one change - our group would be "a **minimum** of seven members". All member term lengths were left as is.

Acting Chair Davison looked for a motion to ask Council to approve a minimum of seven members.

Moved by Resident Members Jobson and Bourgeois that the committee go to Council with the new wording of "minimum of seven members".

Motion Carried.

Staff member Waters was advised by Clerk Snair that two committee members' three-year terms were over as of October 31, 2023 (Jennifer Davison and Kelly Ann Jobson). Both can reoffer. No decisions need to be made today.

c) New Sports Complex Exercise Equipment Video – Updated and Posted

Staff Member Waters advised that this video was reshot and posted on the municipality's social media on November 16. Resident Member Stephens is featured using the new equipment. At the end of the video, a change was made to have the bar placed in a more accessible resting position. Staff are still working to make this equipment as accessible as possible. The video was played for all to view.

There was consensus that more videos like this one should be created. They are effective promotional tools.

6. New Business

a) Active Living Strategy Partner Engagement

Staff Member Waters made this presentation to the committee. The Active Living Strategy is being revamped with a new five-year plan (2024-2028). The goal is to have it written by end of December 2023. The biggest aspect involves communication with as many

community organizations as possible to get first-voice input. The Accessibility Committee plays a part here.

Staff Member Waters provided a brief history as to how active living strategies came to be through the MPAL Program, started in 2006 in partnership with the provincial government and Nova Scotia's First Nations communities. West Hants' first municipal strategy was launched in 2013.

The Active Living Strategy creates concrete objectives to achieve and ensures focus on improving the community's ability to be physically active in an autonomous manner (reducing barriers).

Staff Member Waters discussed who they have reached (age groups, gender, range of physical activity) for consultation via social media posts and community socials. There is currently a gender gap and he is looking at strategies to reach out to the male voice.

The most positive part is that people are self-reporting that they are physically active in our community.

Staff Member Waters reviewed current activities of choice. Walking is by far the most popular. Community members are more inclined towards autonomous activities.

The next slide displayed activities that community members would like to do more often. Quite a variety, including swimming, paddling (canoe, kayak, SUP), fitness programs, strength training, recreation programs, walking and biking.

Barriers to participation within our communities were identified. Lack of time, programs or classes offered, programs not being offered locally, childcare and financial barriers were some of the top factors mentioned. With regard to the barrier of no one to be active with, Staff Member Waters was able to confirm through his own experience with sledge hockey that those who came to the program with a buddy were much more likely to continue through multiple seasons. Surprisingly, transportation did not come up as a barrier.

Committee members offered their feedback as to perceived barriers, which included:

- Transportation. What is the accessible option? Dial-A-Ride is not enough, we need more accessible taxis or an accessible bus. Our community's Senior Society bus is more of a charter option. In HRM, accessible taxis were subsidized.
- Past municipal try-it sessions were not easily accessed due to location of the event (too far out of town).
- The large size of our region is a barrier in itself.
- Communication struggles are a barrier – how to reach everyone to promote events.
- The lack of accessible infrastructure is a barrier. Lack of sidewalks, condition of sidewalks is an impediment. Lack of a sidewalk from New Boundaries to the Sports Complex was cited.
- Mapping out accessible walking routes might help.

What can be achieved in the next five years around improving accessibility infrastructure?

The next slide prompted a discussion as to how does/how would you like to see accessibility play a role in active living?

- You move towards being inclusive by offering a wide variety of activities instead of just one or two
- More support for low-barrier activities like swimming. All family members can participate at the same time.
- Dance would also be a low barrier activity, enjoyed by many, with social and inclusive components.
- Offer home services/outreach programs for those who can't leave their homes due to mobility issues
- Use social media to ask, "What would you like to do?"
- Offer sampler classes/programs which would offer a little of something different each month (dance, yoga, etc.).
- Having the ability to offer support at events/programs/activities, especially after daytime hours. Timing needs to line up with available support
- Capacity-building, finding more people who are trained to work with people with disabilities

How can the Accessibility Committee improve active living in West Hants?

- The committee is tasked with and obligated to provide feedback as things are happening, not after the fact.
- The committee needs to take a proactive approach. Follow legislation as it comes into play.
- Focus on accessibility as it relates to seniors (a large demographic within the municipality). Broaden accessibility definition. Frailty and aging are in line with the definition of accessibility.
- No known active aging group in West Hants
- Chair yoga is a popular and inclusive activity for those with mobility issues
- “Meet people where they are.” Citing an example of New Boundaries participants visiting seniors at Haliburton Place. Get to the more rural areas, take activities there.
- Engage at the elementary school level. Hold conversations around active living, active transportation, persons with disabilities, accessibility. Early education.

When Staff Member Waters posed the question, what is your wish list for the future of West Hants, feedback from committee members included:

- An indoor pool
- An accessible gym space
- That information regarding funding/grants available for accessibility retrofits be easily available and widespread. And that businesses and organizations take full advantage of this funding.
- The creation of an equation to score accessibility, apply it to facilities, trails, etc.
- Keep celebrating the good stuff and identifying the things that need improvement.
- That we receive user feedback re accessibility.
- That more videos are produced to feature and promote accessibility within WHRM
- A fully accessible, regularly scheduled bus service
- More accessible sidewalks
- To have more people with disabilities come out to our public building walk-throughs, programs, etc. to offer feedback.

b) Facilities Update

Staff Member Waters provided a brief facilities update on behalf of Facilities Manager, Kevin Bennett, as related to the repairs to the Windsor Community Centre basement at 78 Thomas St.

The basement remains under reconstruction, post flooding. Per insurance requirements, all must be restored to its original condition. After that, Staff Member Bennet will address the notes from the committee’s walkthrough in November.

Sound baffles have been installed in the Sports Complex. A lot of great updates are happening there.

There was feedback from community members walking the track during a hockey tournament that the sound system was too loud.

There has been no change to the area where wheelchair users sit. There is ongoing discussion – either improving the current area or moving to a new area. Resident Member Stephens is a proponent for moving this designation to the viewing area directly above centre ice.

c) Fireworks

Staff Member Waters received an email from CAO Phillips on the subject of fireworks, as the result of correspondence received at a Committee of the Whole (COTW) meeting. Thinking about the impact of related noise on our residents, the committee has been tasked to consider the following four options as related to a committee/municipal stance on fireworks:

1. Remain status quo on fireworks
2. Increase communication and education surrounding events that include fireworks, including municipal events, and also to require advance notice and approval of these events
3. No-noise fireworks only
4. To no longer permit fireworks in our community as pertaining to accessibility concerns

Staff Member McKay mentioned that she recently attended a fire-related course in Cape Breton where a presentation on fireworks confirmed that there is no such thing as a no-noise firework. This eliminates Option Three.

Is there an option for a light show instead of fireworks? Exploring light shows is an option, along the lines of a “Glow”-type event. The Community Development department is

moving away from including fireworks at their events for the time being until this issue is settled.

The point was raised that there are two types of firework events – the bigger, municipally-held or permitted events and people setting off smaller-scale fireworks in their back yards (happens frequently in many areas of our municipality).

Staff Member Waters feels that the particular task set forth to the Accessibility Committee would specifically address municipal use of fireworks.

There was good discussion surrounding noise, the effect on animals, utilizing a noise by-law, and the inability to enforce said by-law due to the sheer volume and random occurrence of backyard fireworks. This is the case across the country, even with laws in place, such as in Ontario. There are regulations surrounding permitted locations for sales, storage and to set off fireworks, but not enough officials to police.

Staff Member Waters suggested there may be two separate conversations to be had; to no longer include fireworks at municipal events; and, to review the possibility of including the noise created by fireworks in a noise by-law. For now, we could possibly amend Option Two (increased education and communication), as a good starting point, while seeking public feedback.

It was noted that fireworks are included as banned events when provincial burn bans are in place. In Resident Member Davison's experience as a member of the Southwest Hants Fire Department, there have been no fire calls related to the use of fireworks.

Committee members agreed to approach this issue from the standpoint of how it should be handled from an Accessibility Committee. Staff Member Waters posed the question, what would be the stance on fireworks for people with disabilities purely based on how noise would affect them?

As the Accessibility Advisory Committee, we can advise that it is inaccessible and unsafe to have fireworks in our community, especially for people with auditory sensitivities. We can advise that fireworks aren't safe for the community of people this committee is tasked to serve. Keep it at that based on facts.

It was decided to leave the discussion here. The committee will look to make a motion at the next meeting with hopefully more members present.

d) **Front Counter Accessibility (added to the agenda)**

Staff Member Waters read an email sent to the Accessibility Advisory Committee from Occupational Health and Safety Committee Representative for Financial Services, Jenny LaPierre. This was regarding accessibility for the front counter at the municipality's 76 Morison Drive work site. Renovations were recently completed to make all three workstations at the front counter, sit-down stations. Customer Service staff requested that one of the workstations remain as a standing counter as some customers are not able or comfortable sitting, but that did not happen. They are now looking at a podium-style option for those customers that are not able to sit for various reasons. Is this something that can be brought up to the committee in the hope that we can have the request completed.

Some members of the committee took a few minutes to have a look at the workspace as the meeting was being held in the same building.

Committee members agreed that a sit-down only option is not an accessible option for everyone. It was noted by Resident Member Stephens that he could not access the counter from his wheelchair, the debit machine was not wireless and had no privacy screen.

If we all agree that the front counter is inaccessible in its current state, what are some options?

- Something to lean on.
- Do an informal assessment using a detailed checklist that would follow along the Rick Hansen certification standards – there is a whole section dedicated to reception counter areas. Resident Member Bourgeois would be able to do this (at no cost and not as an official certification assessment).
- Make all stations accessible as per the definition of accessibility that mandates, “it all needs to be accessible, however you encounter it”.

Discussion ensued surrounding how to approach the issue. It was suggested that a motion be made asking Council to move forward with changes to the front counter to make it more accessible. This would require a recommendation report and need to be submitted

in time to be included in the upcoming budget. More information on this process was required.

The committee could also ask staff to review and suggest options. It may even be prudent to engage a consultant.

When considering the urgency, where would this issue fall? Red? Yellow? Green?

Because it's the access point/public facing piece of the organization, it would certainly be green or yellow (midrange urgency or higher).

It was determined that the committee would keep it as an action item for review.

Moved by Staff Member Waters and Resident Member Boyd that the Accessibility Committee review the accessibility of the front counter.

Motion Carried.

e) Next Walk-Through Location

Staff Member Waters asked committee members for their suggestions. There was consensus that it would be good to hold it somewhere other than Windsor. Hantsport was the most popular alternative location with suggestions of Churchill House at HMCC, Wellwood Hall at the Hantsport Baptist Church and the Hantsport Public Library. The question was raised as to whether the site had to be municipally owned. Staff Member Waters offered to do some further investigation and would advise the committee.

7. Next Meeting Date / Meeting Adjournment

The next meeting date is tentative for January 18, 2024, location still to be determined. Carmen will send out a "save the date" email.

Resident Member Davison mentioned that the province will be doing an accessibility assessment on the emergency alert system, and that this may be something coming to the committee.

Meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

X

Committee Chair

