

**WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY**  
**Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda**  
**May 29, 2025, 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 YouTube*



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1. Call to Order
  2. Attendance
  3. Announcements
  4. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
  5. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – April 23, 2025
  6. Unfinished Business
    - a) Work Plan
    - b) Video Project
  7. Next Meeting Date / Meeting Adjournment

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    - b) Video Project Proposal
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**WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY**  
**Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
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1. Call to Order – Chair Bourgeois called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. noting quorum was achieved.

2. Attendance

Michel Bourgeois, Resident Member  
Councillor Chrystal Remme  
Jennifer Davison, Resident Member  
Tina McKay, Building & Fire Official  
Tim Leslie, Manager of Building & Fire Officials

Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk  
Roseanna Boyd, Resident Member  
Jordan Stephens, Resident Member  
Melissa MacAskill, Resident Member  
Kathy Johnston-Isenor, Manager of Recreation & Community Engagement

Regrets:

Carmen Dewar-Miller, Admin Assistant  
Denise Long, Resident Member  
Troy Burgess, Public Works Operations Manager

Amie Deleavey, Resident Member  
Mark Phillips, CAO

3. Announcements

West Hants Regional Municipality acknowledges 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 recognizes that we are all treaty people and have responsibilities to this land and each other.

West Hants Regional Municipality also recognizes African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose history, legacies, and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

Committee members were reminded of the proper behavior expected of them from the Municipal Code of Conduct.

Happy Administrative Professionals Day was shared.

There were round table introductions.

4. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions

With no changes made to the agenda, the agenda was accepted as presented.

5. Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes – March 27, 2025

With no changes required, the minutes were accepted as presented.

6. Unfinished Business

a) Video Project Proposal

A small working group met consisting of Michel Bourgeois, Jordan Stevens, Rosanna Boyd, and Kathy Johnston Isner to discuss Jordan's overall vision for the video project proposal. The plan was to look at the project in phases.

Citizen member Jordan shared a high-level overview of his vision with the committee members. Phase 1 - Create approximately 20-30, 40 second videos that highlighted and celebrated accessibility throughout the region and business communities. Each video would have a focus on public spaces and services used by everyone, regardless of ability and focus on some of the great work the business community has undertaken to make their stores accessible to all. This could include features like wheelchair ramps, accessible signage, inclusive language, removing barriers and obstacles in aisles, etc. The goal of these videos was to create awareness and educational opportunities for both community and businesses on creating spaces and the ability to access services where everyone can participate fully and equally. The videos would celebrate the successes that West Hants has achieved so far and look for ways to build momentum and improve in other areas. West Hants (WHRM) could lead by example and inspire others in the business community to take similar actions or help mentor them by offering advice/resource information on steps to be a more accessible/welcoming space. Tim Horton's and Walker's Restaurant were identified as local businesses that played key roles within the community and were generally in agreement to help wherever they could to support and better the community.

Some areas/items to focus on for the videos included:

- Curb cuts
- Debit machines
- Placement of AED's
- Placement of building controls (light switches, etc.)
- Maintaining and keeping ramps and entrances clear from debris
- Keeping aisles in shops/stores accessible and free from displays and boxes
- Wayfinding signage (interior and in the community)- showcasing location of ramps, etc.
- Removing boxes from under counters/tables
- Proper placement of garbage cans to avoid blocking access to light switches, door pushes, fire alarms, etc.

It was important the videos be positive and celebrated achievements and not be a platform to publicly shame businesses. This was about being uplifting, inspiring and striving for a fully accessible community for all.

Committee members were encouraged to make a mental note of businesses where they felt they had a good experience or recognized the business was worthy of a shout out for their awareness and steps taken to address accessibility. They agreed to share names of businesses via email. From there the committee could establish a list of businesses that they could connect with to see if they would be willing to participate in a short video showcasing the great work they have or are doing. A thought was that businesses could be showcased as "An Inspiring Business of the Week".

The committee discussed the video project expanding and having a phased in approach. Ideally there would be five (5) phases:

1. Business Audience – connecting with local businesses to help take on a pilot project that looked to celebrate accessibility wins
2. General education
3. Introducing the Accessibility Committee to the public
4. Highlight positive accessibility within the communities
5. Create “a day in the life of videos”. These videos would showcase local community members, friends and family living with a disability going through their everyday activities, navigating challenges and provide an opportunity for able bodies individuals to experience these same challenges through a different lens and have a better understanding of what it's like to live with a disability.

This would be a lengthier process, but the committee felt these videos would be valuable and were excited to embark on the projects.

With May being Accessibility month, the committee were eager to get started and felt that introducing the committee to the public would be a great first step.

#### b) Work Plan

Chair Bourgeois spoke of the creation of a work plan and the reason/importance behind having a work plan. Once the committee established a workplan it would be presented to Council for endorsement and approval. Chair Bourgeois spoke of having some smaller, achievable goals but also having larger goals.

The committee discussed options they felt would be easily achieved in the work plan and a good place to start; these options included:

1. Adding a section in the Council report form templates that speaks to the request aligning with the Accessibility plan. The committee were advised this form was in the Meeting and Committee Procedural policy and staff were planning to present amendments to this policy at the upcoming meeting in May. Staff will incorporate this addition into the template as part of the proposed amendments.
2. Improve website. If people are being sent to the website to access information, improvements were needed to make it more accessible and use friendly. Work is currently underway to improve the website; however, it was likely this work would bring the website into compliance with accessibility standards, but it would be an improvement compared to the current website. It was agreed this was a step in the right direction. Councillor Remme advised there were ways and resources available to assist and make improvements to be more accessible. Staff welcome any information or suggestions on ways to improve access to the website for all and look forward to making any changes suggested.
3. Add a section in tender documents to identify any new municipal building construction or updates will strive to meet the Rick Hansen Gold Standards for accessibility. This

addition to the tender documents would bring them in alignment with the Anti-hate, Anti-racism, Accessibility Plan. This sparked a lengthy discussion on current building code standards, enforcement challenges, roles of a committee and decisions made by Council. Building and Fire Officials explained they are only able to enforce what the Building Code states, they do not have the authority to hold businesses to a higher standard than what was written within the building codes. The committee understood that WHRM was not able to hold a business or someone else to a higher standard than what was identified in code; however, Council endorsed the Anti-hate, Anti-racism, Accessibility Plan with the addition that any new municipal building construction or updates to existing buildings will strive to meet the Rick Hansen Gold Standards for accessibility. As an accessibility committee, they unanimously felt passionate that it was their role advocate to Council to meet this standard and to make sure all municipality facilities met accessibility standards and that all of West Hants was fully accessible to all. The committee will continue to advocate that Council adhere to the standards they set within the Anti-hate, Anti-racism, Accessibility Plan for all municipal building upgrades or new builds.

Chair Bourgeois suggested he would share a draft work plan template with the committee members, and everyone could provide feedback on it. The committee agreed to proceed as suggested.

The sub-committee will meet again and start developing the framework for the videos.

The committee would like to get together and have a photo taken that will be used to introduce the Accessibility Committee to the public. It was agreed that once Carmen returns from vacation, the committee would like her to send out a Doodle poll to determine a time when all the committee members can meet briefly to have a group photo done.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will take place on May 29, 2025. Deanna will extend a calendar invite to committee members.

7. Next Meeting Date/Meeting Adjournment

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

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Chair

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DRAFT

Please find a summary of proposed Work Plan items for discussion. This is not necessarily the ‘final’ list and if there are other items that anyone wants to discuss, let’s do that!

While we do need to be aware of the broader impacts on budgets and other resources, it is important to provide Council with suggestions on how to meet the commitments of “the plan”.

The timeframe on some items may end up being longer than expected. That could mean that there is an information gathering phase that may better inform an implementation phase in a subsequent fiscal year. The completion date of some items would be budget dependant, so the start date is easier to commit to.

Remember, whatever “Work Plan” we agree to submit, we still have opportunities to do other things. I encourage anyone who has an idea to share. We do need to make sure that our activities align with the goals of the Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility Plan. That provides ample opportunities for initiative.

Action Item	Alignment with Accessibility Plan	Resources Required	Time Frame	Desired Outcome	Performance Indicators (How will accomplishments be measured)
Inventory and assessment of curbside accessible parking spaces	Strategic Action #10	Municipal Staff AAC	2025-28	Have existing accessible parking meet CSA-B651 standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete inventory</li> <li>• Determine if location can meet standard</li> <li>• Implement upgrades</li> </ul>
Include Accessibility in Staff Reports to Council	Strategic Action #4	Municipal Staff AAC	2025-27	Have the template for reports to Council include Accessibility as one of the considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research best practices</li> <li>• Adopt</li> <li>• Implement</li> <li>• Review</li> </ul>
Establish a pre-tender review process of WHRM Capital Projects for accessibility	Strategic Action #4	Municipal Staff AAC	2025-26	Capital Projects will be reviewed with a dedicated accessibility lens prior to tender being issued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map process</li> <li>• Establish review group</li> <li>• Implement</li> </ul>

Website Accessibility Review	Strategic Action # 18	Municipal Staff AAC	2025-2028	The WHRM website should meet WCAG 2.0 standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• current status</li> <li>• incremental upgrades</li> <li>• WCAG 2.0</li> </ul>
Inventory and assessment of WHRM Facilities	Strategic Action # 4	Municipal Staff AAC	2026-2030	An accurate inventory of WHRM Facilities and the accessibility of each.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine scope</li> <li>• Establish process</li> <li>• Status Reports</li> </ul>
Provide Guidance and Recognition of Local Businesses and Community Groups and events.	Strategic Action # 5	AAC Municipal Staff	2025-2028	Provide non-binding guidance on accessibility enhancements. Public Recognition of same	To be determined
Create Videos highlighting Accessibility features and related experiences	Strategic Action # 5	AAC Municipal Staff	2025-ongoing	Build awareness by creating media	To be determined

- **Conduct an inventory/assessment of curbside accessible parking spaces.**
  - The Committee should understand how and why accessible curbside parking locations are determined.
  - Capture location, current condition, including a broad scope of work to achieve CSA-B651 standard
  - This would require staff time and expertise. AAC could assist as appropriate
  - Costing compiled from unit pricing in existing agreements or issued for tender. Schedule depends on funding.
  - There is value in completing the inventory as a first step.

- **Include Accessibility in Staff Report Template:**

- The complexity in this initiative is establishing a checklist for report authors, appropriate to WHRM's

This would help keep accessibility in play when Council is considering action. It is understood that some reports would have no relevant accessibility impact.

This requires a broader understanding of what concerns should be identified. Report authors could be required to describe all considerations and actions taken by staff to assess potential accessibility impacts which result from proposed policies and projects. Any consultations on accessibility matters, including consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee would be recorded in a "Consultation" section of the report. It is the responsibility of the originating department to complete the Accessibility Impacts section of the report template.

All reports must be reviewed by the originating department to ensure that accessibility is considered in the early stages of initiatives, and to track the development and integration of accessibility features. Reports ranging from site plan approval, the implementation of new infrastructure or a new facility, plans to expand a recreation centre, and alterations of operational service standards or programming, all require a thorough consideration of accessibility impacts. There are examples of a report author 'checklist' that could provide general guidance. (i.e. City of Ottawa)

- **Review existing Pre-Tender Review process to explore opportunities to effectively identify accessibility components.**

The pre-tender stage is a foundational phase in the tendering process, setting the groundwork for a successful project. It begins with the identification of the project need, where stakeholders define the scope and objectives. This stage involves consultation with stakeholders, coordination of effort and identification of areas of overlap with other projects. This process helps ensure alignment with strategic goals in a proactive manner. Stakeholders must consider various factors such as budget constraints, regulatory requirements, and environmental impacts.

- **If a similar process exists**, review for effectiveness. (scope, stakeholders etc.)
- **If no such policy exists**, establish a documented process for review of Capital Projects by a range of stakeholders. This can avoid missed opportunities and improve communication, resulting in better results that align with WHRM's commitment to accessibility.

- **Improve WHRM website accessibility**

The WHRM website is an important point of access for information. Improvements are needed to make it more accessible and user friendly. Work is currently underway to improve the website; however, it's unlikely this work would bring the website into compliance with

accessibility standards. A jurisdictional scan should be undertaken to explore and identify resources available to assist and make improvements to be more accessible.

- Identify if in-house resources exist to bring website to **WCAG 2.0 standard\*(to be confirmed)**
  - If resources do not exist, explore options for contractor, temporary staff or establishing a dedicated Communication position.
  - **In the interim, there may be opportunities to make strategic upgrades that improve the user experience.**
- **Accessibility Review of existing WHRM buildings and facilities.** \*This initiative only includes WHRM facilities. The Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility Plan does not speak to private facilities and residential developments. While the Plan does **encourage** inclusion of accessibility features in all buildings and spaces, the Building Code enforcement and inspection process is outside of the Plan's scope. No change in that process is proposed as part of this Work Plan.

To achieve the goals outlined in the West Hants Equity, Anti-Racism and Accessibility Plan, the Committee recommends the following.

- Establish scope of inventory (Facilities, Parks and Open Spaces etc.)
  - Identify criteria for accessibility review.
  - Determine how WHRM will meet the goals of the plan on its own new builds and major renos. (Commitment to strive for Rick Hansen Gold Certification)
  - As inventory is complete, improvements could take advantage of economies of scale vs one site at a time.
- **Offer Guidance and Recognition of Local Businesses and Community Groups and events.**

\*This is a combination of Sub-Actions 5.1/5.2/5.3

- Provide practical guidance and support to local businesses and community groups to enhance the accessibility of their built environment and events.
- **Create Videos highlighting Accessibility features and related experiences**  
Awareness of Accessibility would be enhanced by the creation of media (video/print etc.). This initiative would highlight accomplishments and showcase opportunities for improvement.  
These videos posted online could link to an embedded form providing an opportunity for feedback. Any data collected could be then used to inform subsequent decisions and processes.

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