

DATE OF MEETING MARCH 6, 2023
AUTHORED BY NATALIE SPONAUGLE, COMMUNICATIONS ADVISOR
SUBJECT **ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVENESS**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide Council with an updated terms of reference for the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness.

Recommendation

That Council endorse the updated terms of reference for the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness as attached to the staff report dated 2023-MAR-06.

BACKGROUND

The Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI) was first established at the December 16, 2019 Regular Council meeting. The committee's first three-year term was successful in providing ideas, oversight and feedback on a number of achievements related to furthering accessibility, inclusion and diversity within the City.

On September 1, 2022, updates were made to the *Accessible British Columbia Act*. These changes made it a requirement for public sector organizations to establish:

1. an accessibility committee
2. an accessibility plan
3. a mechanism for collecting feedback on accessibility

Organizations have until September 1, 2023 to comply.

Accessibility Committee

The ACAI meets the requirements for an accessibility committee and the updated terms of reference reflect the new membership composition requirements. Under the new regulation, the *Accessible B.C. Act* indicates that, to the extent possible:

- at least half of its members must be persons with disabilities or represent a disability-serving organization;
- the committee should represent the diversity of British Columbians; and,
- the committee must have Indigenous representation.

Accessibility Plan

In 2022, the Accessibility Directorate reviewed the draft *City Plan* and confirmed that it meets the requirements for an accessibility plan, with implementation to be built on it through the *Integrated Action Plan*. Under the new requirements, the ACAI will be required to review and update the accessibility actions every three years, which is reflected in the updated terms of reference. Staff will be working to ensure that an accessible version of the plan is available on the City website.

Public Feedback Tool

The final legislated requirement is having a public feedback tool. This can be something as simple as a dedicated email address or online webform and staff will be working on setting this up over the coming weeks. When updating the accessibility plan/actions, comments received through this public feedback must be considered.

DISCUSSION

At the February 13, 2023 Governance and Priorities Committee, Council members were given the opportunity to provide feedback on proposed changes to the committee's terms of reference through the use of Zoom polls. Staff have reviewed the feedback and discussion that took place and have prepared an amended terms of reference for Council's consideration (Attachment A).

An Empowered Nanaimo

In addition to the legislated updates required, there is an opportunity for the ACAI to play an important role in reviewing *City Plan's Empowered Nanaimo* goals and helping to see those goals achieved, and further opportunities identified. With *City Plan* serving as the City's accessibility plan, and many of the **Empowered Nanaimo** policies related to accessibility, equity, diversity and inclusion, having a committee dedicated to furthering those goals could be a positive asset to the community.

With a mandate to "promote social and political equity within existing and proposed City plans, policies, bylaws and infrastructure and make recommendations to ensure that they are inclusive and accommodating to citizens of all ages, abilities and walks of life", the ACAI supports the *City Plan* goal of being an **Empowered Nanaimo**. This includes looking at ways to ensure that Nanaimo:

- is an inclusive and accessible community, with equitable opportunities for all to participate in and enjoy;
- is committed to working together and collaborating with First Nations towards a common future; and,
- feels welcoming and safe to all those who choose this city as home.

Youth Representation

Including a youth representative on the committee will help to ensure that this demographic's unique perspective is taken into account. Including a youth representative on City committees moving forward is recommended by staff and will provide an opportunity to encourage those of a younger generation to become involved. |

OPTIONS

1. That Council endorse the updated terms of reference for the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness as attached to the staff report dated 2023-MAR-06.
 - Advantages: The updated terms of reference meets the legislated requirements introduced on September 1, 2022. Other proposed amendments reflect Council's commitment to building and supporting a community that is accessible, diverse, equitable and inclusive.
 - Disadvantages: None.
 - Financial Implications: Not meeting the requirements of the *Accessible B.C. Act* could result in the City being fined up to \$250,000.

2. That Council provide alternate direction to staff. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The ACAI was first established in December 2019 and its last meeting was held in September 2022.
- Updates to the *Accessible B.C. Act* came into effect September 1, 2022 and organizations have until September 1, 2023 to come into compliance.
- The ACAI meets the requirements for an accessibility committee and will be a valuable resource to contribute towards helping the City fulfill the other legislated requirements related to an accessibility plan and reviewing public feedback.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Proposed terms of reference for the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness |

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