



## MINUTES

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVENESS MEETING

Wednesday, November 8, 2023, 4:01 P.M.  
Boardroom, Service and Resource Centre,  
411 Dunsmuir Street, Nanaimo, BC

- Present: Councillor S. Armstrong, Chair  
Councillor H. Eastmure  
T. Brzovic, At Large Member \*  
J. Cowan, At Large Member  
L. Derksen, At Large Member  
S. Enns, At Large Member  
W. Hall, At Large Member  
R. Harlow, At Large Member \*  
T. Hirasawa, At Large Member  
A. Stuart, At Large Member \*  
N. Sugiyama, At Large Member (entered 4:02 p.m.)
- Absent: B. Kinrade, At Large Member  
J. Maffin, At Large Member
- Others: Kelsi Hurlbut, The TULA Project
- Staff: D. Lindsay, Chief Administrative Officer (entered 4:49 p.m.)  
K. Ing, Director, Information Technology/Chief Information Officer  
D. Osborne, Director, Recreation and Culture  
L. Brinkman, Manager, Community Planning  
L. Clarkson, Manager, Recreation Services  
C. Davis, Manager, Parks Operations \*  
K. MacDonald, Parks and Open Space Planner  
K. Robertson, Deputy Corporate Officer  
J. Tonella, Steno, Legislative Services  
A. Chanakos, Recording Secretary

#### 1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER:

The Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness Meeting was called to order at 4:01 p.m.

\* Denotes electronic meeting participation as authorized by "Council Procedure Bylaw 2018 No. 7272"

## 2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

It was moved and seconded that the Agenda be adopted. The motion carried unanimously.

## 3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

### a. Minutes

It was moved and seconded that the following Minutes be adopted as circulated:

- Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness Meeting held in the Boardroom, Service and Resource Centre, 411 Dunsmuir Street, Nanaimo, BC, on Wednesday, 2023-SEP-06, at 4:04 p.m.
- Minutes of the Special Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness Meeting held in the Boardroom, Service and Resource Centre, 411 Dunsmuir Street, Nanaimo, BC, on Wednesday, 2023-OCT-11 at 4:00 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.

## 4. PRESENTATIONS:

### a. Phased Concept Plan for Westwood Lake Park Amenity Improvements

Introduced by Darcie Osborne, Director, Recreation and Culture.

- Westwood Lake Park Amenity Improvements project is a key priority for Council and is represented throughout the City Plan and multiple Integrated Action Plans
- Westwood Lake Park is not easily accessible for all community members
- Phase 1 of the project provided some improvements resulting in improved park access

### Presentation:

1. Kirsty MacDonald, Parks and Open Space Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation. Highlights included:
  - Phase 1 of the project was completed in the Spring 2023
  - Next steps include collecting feedback from the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI) to reduce barriers and ensure the park is more inclusive

- There are three main access points to Westwood Lake; however, the primary focus is the main parking lot on Westwood Road
- The park was built 50 years ago by volunteers and hasn't changed much since then. As a result, it can no longer accommodate the increased number of users
- Council approved a project to add amenities to the park in 2021
- Public engagement was carried out through the ReImagine Nanaimo process, and one key priority identified was to make the park more inclusive and accessible
- Council recently adopted an Integrated Action Plan through ReImagine Nanaimo and six of the priority actions focus on increasing accessibility at Westwood Lake Park
- Main themes identified from public engagement include focusing on the natural park setting, balancing the needs of different types of users to avoid conflicts, adding more amenities, and addressing accessibility/inclusivity concerns
- The previous ACAI reviewed the initial project plan in 2021 and provided feedback for Staff
- One item noted by the previous ACAI was the need for additional accessible parking stalls. As a result, eight additional stalls have been added for a total of 12 accessible parking stalls that can accommodate both rear- and side-loading vans
- Other requests from the previous ACAI, included adult change stations and inclusive play areas. These are hoped to be achieved in Phase 2 of the project
- Phase 1 improvements included increasing the number of parking stalls, changing access points to the parking lot, improving flow and parking for larger and emergency vehicles, and integrating stormwater management into the parking lot
- The main focus of Phase 2 is increasing beach space at First Beach and adding shade and picnic areas

Committee discussion took place regarding increasing public transportation to Westwood Lake Park.

Kirsty MacDonald, Parks and Open Space Planner, continued the presentation. Highlights included:

- Increasing waterfront access points is a key priority
- Considering adding a Mobi-Mat, or similar mobility aid, to increase access across the sand to the water

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- All amenities being added will require maintenance
- As Westwood Lake is City-owned land, it is likely a Mobi-Mat would be available for a longer period of the year compared to ocean-front sites
- Maintenance costs are not included in current costs and would be later added to the operating budget
- Need to consider access to sandy areas to sit, as well as access to the water

Kirsty MacDonald, Parks and Open Space Planner, continued the presentation. Highlights included:

- Considering improvements for accessing a kayak or boat from a wheelchair
- Phase 2 will implement a variety of hard surface types as well as sand and grass
- Natural materials including wood and recycled products are also being considered for integration

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Bumpy surfaces pose problems for canes, wheelchairs, and individuals with spinal cord issues. Ramps should also include edge protection for both wheelchair users and the visually impaired
- Consideration should be given for potential vandalism that could occur to newly added structures
- Poured-in-place rubber, asphalt and concrete are preferred over materials such as paving stones that shift over time
- Concerns around upkeep and slippery conditions of wood surfaces during icy weather

Kirsty MacDonald, Parks and Open Space Planner, continued the presentation. Highlights included:

- Existing washroom building is at the end of its life and is limited to how it can be repurposed as an inclusive space
- Adult change space, adaptive rider storage and universal washrooms should be included in the new accessible washroom building
- Existing fishing dock was partially funded by the Rick Hansen Foundation and Nanaimo Fish and Game Club, and is sited in a location that is not accessible for all users. Phase 2 will look to include an accessible fishing area

Committee discussion took place regarding monitoring the use of the boat trailer parking spaces.

Kirsty MacDonald, Parks and Open Space Planner, continued the presentation. Highlights included:

- Consideration for making trails more accessible to all trail users and including adaptive rider storage
- Adding new comfort structures like shade, picnic tables and benches, and also incorporating a variety of furniture types to accommodate all park users

Committee discussion took place regarding incorporating a variety of chairs with and without arms, as well as providing smooth spaces next to seating areas for wheelchair users.

Kirsty MacDonald, Parks and Open Space Planner, continued the presentation and asked for suggestions from the Committee regarding amenities that should be added to the park.

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Adding sturdy picnic tables to allow people to sit and eat
- Barbeque pits are not able to be supported in the City's park system due to fire hazards
- Looking to increase services to allow more food trucks to operate
- Approximately 4km of Westwood Lake trail is accessible but due to the grade in one area, the entire length of the trail cannot be made fully accessible
- Addition of a sunscreen dispensing station near the beach
- Providing beach wheelchairs for public use, with storage for those wheelchairs in the adaptable storage building

Kirsty MacDonald, Parks and Open Space Planner, continued the presentation and noted that a site visit could be planned in the near future to provide further feedback.

## **5. REPORTS:**

### **a. Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness Workplan**

Introduced by Darcie Osborne, Director, Recreation and Culture.

- A final ACAI Workplan has been drafted based on feedback from the workshop held 2023-OCT-11

- An overarching goal was added to the top of the workplan to identify the overall target and theme
- Feedback was considered, and changes were incorporated into the main topics of the workplan
- Integrated Action Plan items related to accessibility, diversity and inclusion will be brought forward for review at the next ACAI meeting
- The City's Human Resources department is in the process of developing a framework regarding the City's hiring process, and will attend a future ACAI meeting for feedback

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- ACAI is a City committee, developed to provide feedback on City facilities and projects
- Staff hope to bring the Development Permit Area Guidelines to the Committee for feedback to improve the guidelines going forward
- Recommendations cannot be brought to Council regarding hiring practices as Council is not involved in hiring of City staff, and Union Guidelines must be followed; however, the Committee could reach out to disability groups when jobs are posted to encourage applications

It was moved and seconded that the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (ACAI) recommend that Council endorse the ACAI 2023-2026 workplan as presented in the report titled "Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness Workplan", dated 2023-NOV-08. The motion carried.

Opposed: *John Cowan and Richard Harlow*

b. Hearing Assistive Device Options for Installation at City Facilities

Introduced by Darcie Osborne, Director, Recreation and Culture.

- At the 2023-JUN-07 ACAI meeting, a recommendation was brought forward to Council for Staff to write a report on the feasibility of audio enhancements and closed captioning options to assist hearing impaired individuals in City facilities. The recommendation passed at the 2023-JUN-19 Regular Council meeting
- Staff connected with outside agencies that have implemented various hearing assistive technologies for feedback

Presentation:

1. Kerry Ing, Director, IT/Chief Information Officer, provided a PowerPoint presentation. Highlights included:

- Staff reached out to Advanced Listening, who provided a demo of their various hearing assistive devices
- Induction Loop Systems are relatively low cost and offer more privacy than other systems
- Induction Loop Systems use a microphone that amplifies a speaker's voice to a listener's hearing aid directly. In larger settings, an antenna would be set up around a table, and sound would be picked up by t-coil hearing aids
- Induction Loop technology is older, but the systems are simple to deploy and at a low cost; however, Induction Loop Systems only work on t-coil hearing aids and not all hearing aids are equipped with t-coils
- Speech to Text involves a speaker talking into a microphone, phone or tablet, and the speech is translated onto a user's device as text
- This technology is widely available as most smartphones offer speech to text as a standard option, or free apps are available for download; however, some words may not translate accurately

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Text-to-text technology could be utilized, which would rely on accurate typing ability
- Zoom and Microsoft Teams offer closed captioning which is helpful for those who have impaired hearing but don't require hearing aids
- A dual technology approach would be preferred, incorporating both visual and audio assistive technologies

Kerry Ing, Director, IT/Chief Information Officer, continued the presentation. Highlights included:

- Wi-Fi Streaming uses a facility's Wi-Fi service to send signals from a microphone to an amplifier, sending a signal out to a smart phone or tablet
- Individuals would need to have a specific app on their device to receive the sound through headphones
- This is a newer technology and is improving and becoming more widely available
- Wi-Fi Streaming is prone to delays and the sound is not always clear. It is also dependent on the facility's Wi-Fi connectivity
- Wi-Fi Streaming has potential, but the technology may be too new at this point

- The City of Pitt Meadows is implementing this service into Council chambers in the Spring, and Staff will reach out for feedback at a later date
- Radio Frequency works like a radio, where a speaker's voice is sent to an amplifier that sends the broadcast out. A facility would loan out headphones or a device that would pick up the sound, which could then be heard through headphones
- Radio Frequency offers little privacy, as anyone who has a set of headphones for the frequency would be able to hear the conversation. The sound can also travel through walls and floors and is less secure overall

Committee discussion took place regarding facilities providing a tablet to translate speech-to-text via Wi-Fi Streaming, eliminating the need for individuals to come equipped with the technology.

Kerry Ing, Director, IT/Chief Information Officer, continued the presentation. Highlights included:

- Advanced Listening provided Staff a demo of Adaptive Soundfield, where a microphone was attached to a lanyard
- With Adaptive Soundfield, speech is sent to a controller that identifies speech frequency, and cuts out all other background noise, amplifying only the speaker's voice to a listener
- The Phonak Roger Soundfield system amplifies sound directly to compatible hearing aids

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Some hearing aids have an app that can be downloaded to work with a microphone to amplify voices
- Starting out as a pilot project; however, the long-term goal is to have hearing assistive technology in all City facilities that would require it
- Once feedback is received when technology is in place, a program can be built to have hearing assistive devices in all City facilities
- No single solution will work for everyone, and any solution that requires equipment that the City loans out would also will require maintenance so the lifespan and operational requirements need to be considered
- Options that require users to have their own device or app, or that rely on Wi-Fi, can create negative barriers



- A two-way speaker system is preferred over an Induction Loop System as Induction Loop Systems only work with t-coil hearing aids
- Two-way speakers have been installed at the City's recreation facilities already due to plexiglass being installed

It was moved and seconded that the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness recommend that Council approve the implementation of the following pilot project subject to funding:

- Installation of a hearing loop at the front counter at two City facilities, and an adaptive soundfield system in the SARC Boardroom; and,
- Direct Staff to return to a Finance and Audit Committee Meeting to determine funding options for the pilot project.

The motion carried unanimously.

## **6. OTHER BUSINESS:**

- a. Correspondence dated 2023-JUN-05, from Trevor Heshka re: Accessibility Canada Act

Introduced by Councillor Armstrong.

Committee discussion took place regarding the Committee's role in the City's hiring practices, and what accommodations the City could make to reduce barriers in employment.

- b. Discussion re: Inclusive Housing Seminar

Wendy Hall gave a brief overview of the Inclusive Housing Seminar. Highlights included:

- An Inclusive Housing Seminar was held on 2023-JUL-25 hosted by Inclusion BC, and co-hosted by Nanaimo Association for Community Living (NACL) and the Social Planning and Resource Council of BC (SPARC BC). Main concerns addressed at the seminar included:
  - Lack of a crosswalk near the NACL housing development at 3425 Uplands Drive, as many residents in the complex rely on public transit, and the bus stop is on the other side of the road
  - How to make housing inclusive, and minimize the risk of housing being shut down due to some individuals creating issues in the housing complex
  - Ensuring inclusive housing is on a bus route
  - Ensuring housing is inclusive in every way to accommodate a mix of individuals, not just those with diverse abilities
  - Parking spaces need to be large enough to accommodate accessible vehicles

Committee discussion took place regarding providing enough parking in inclusive housing complexes.

**7. QUESTION PERIOD:**

The Committee received no questions from the public regarding agenda items.

**8. ADJOURNMENT:**

It was moved and seconded at 5:59 p.m. that the meeting adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

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MAYOR

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

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CORPORATE OFFICER