



MINUTES

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVENESS MEETING

Wednesday, March 13, 2024, 4:00 P.M.
Boardroom, Service and Resource Centre,
411 Dunsmuir Street, Nanaimo, BC

Members: Councillor H. Eastmure
T. Brzovic, 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
B. Kinrade, At Large Member*
J. Maffin, At Large Member
A. Stuart, At Large Member
N. Sugiyama, At Large Member*

Absent: Councillor S. Armstrong

Staff: D. Lindsay, Chief Administrative Officer
B. Sims, General Manager, Engineering and Public Works
D. Osborne, Director, Recreation and Culture
J. Van Horne, Director, Human Resources
K. Robertson, Deputy Corporate Officer
K. Gonzales, Manager, Aquatics
J. Rose, Manager, Transportation
K. MacDonald, Parks and Open Spaces Planner
K. Lundgren, 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 4:00 p.m.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS:

(a) Move Agenda Item 6(c) Assistive Hearing Devices Update to follow Agenda Item 7(a) Update on Accessibility Improvements to City Parks and Trails.

(b) Add Agenda Item 8(a) Update re: Committee Member Resignation.

3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

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

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

It was moved and seconded that the 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, 2024-JAN-10, at 4:00 p.m., be adopted as circulated. The motion carried unanimously.

5. COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS:

Karen Robertson, Deputy Corporate Officer, advised of the following:

a. Update on Accessibility Improvements to City Facilities

During the 2024-JAN-15 Regular Council Meeting, Council adopted the following motions:

1. "That Council direct Staff to ensure that the following City Recreation Centres receive assessments/audits in 2024:

- Oliver Woods Community Centre
- Beban Park Pool
- Cliff McNabb Arena
- Nanaimo Ice Centre
- Nanaimo Museum
- Vancouver Island Military Museum
- City Hall/SARC"

2. "That Council direct Staff to work with School District #68 and the Regional District of Nanaimo Transit department to develop a plan to address accessibility challenges in navigating from the bus stop at Nanaimo District Secondary School to the Nanaimo Aquatic Centre and the Stadium District."

Darcie Osborne, Director, Recreation and Culture, and Jamie Rose, Manager, Transit, noted that representatives from the Regional District of Nanaimo, Transit System, School District #68 and City of Nanaimo Aquatic Staff met, via Zoom, to review solutions for how to better integrate transit system access with the Nanaimo Aquatic Centre and Nanaimo District Secondary School. She advised that more information would come to the Committee in the future.

6. PRESENTATIONS:

a. Regional District of Nanaimo Transit System

Introduced by Bill Sims, General Manager, Engineering and Public Works.

Presentation:

1. Lainy Stevenson, Superintendent, Transit Planning and Scheduling, Regional District of Nanaimo, and Michael Getchell, Manager, Transit Operations, Transportation Services, Regional District of Nanaimo, provided a PowerPoint presentation. Highlights included:
 - The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) works with BC Transit under an Operating Agreement
 - Current fleet consists of 74 buses, including 15 custom transit buses, four community buses, and 55 conventional buses
 - The workforce consists of approximately 150 employees, including bus operators, dispatchers, road support agents, and maintenance workers
 - The conventional bus system operates 137,800 hours annually, while the custom transit system operates 27,500 hours annually
 - All conventional buses are low-floor buses, meaning they are closer to the curb and provide easier access
 - Conventional buses also have a kneeling feature and ramp, operated on request by the bus operator, to allow further increased ease of access

- Courtesy seating is provided at the front of the bus and is intended for those with mobility issues, both temporary and permanent; however, bus operators cannot remove someone from the seats to accommodate another individual
- Audio and visual stop announcements provide the next three stops on a large screen
- Accessibility requirements need to be met with all new projects that involves transit infrastructure
- “Umo”, the new electronic fare system, was introduced in November 2023, as an additional option to traditional paper bus passes
- Traditional passes are offered on a monthly basis, while Umo passes run 30 days from the first day of use, providing more flexibility
- The BC Bus Pass Program provides passes for persons with disabilities designation and low-income seniors, and is monitored by the Province
- BC transit is encouraging a shift away from traditional paper tickets/passes; however, no date has been set to switch to a fully electronic system

A video was presented providing further details on the Umo program.

Lainy Stevenson, Superintendent, Transit Planning and Scheduling, Regional District of Nanaimo, continued the presentation. Highlights included:

- In addition to the regular fare structure, BC Transit offers inter-regional service to Duncan, as well as monthly passes and a Super Pass which provides service within both the RDN and Cowichan Vally transit systems
- RDN Transit is going through a fare review this year with BC Transit to compare fare structure and schedule patterns with similar sized municipalities, and look for any changes that may be required
- Engagement will occur in the Spring with various types of riders to gain feedback on the current fare structure

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Umo operates by tapping either a physical Umo card, or a digital card on a mobile device, onto a validator installed on the bus
- Concern regarding the lack of discounts offered for custom transit services (handyDART)
- Concern regarding a decrease in handyDart service despite an increase in ridership
- The RDN has requested 2,000 additional custom transit service hours from BC Transit; however, results of that request have not been received yet
- The last fare review six years ago brought the handyDART fare to the same cost as the conventional fare; however, more work is required to increase equity among transit systems
- Once there is better understanding of how Umo works across BC, it can begin to be integrated into other types of passes, such as Compass Cards
- An additional 10,000 hours has been requested for conventional transit service, which would include increased frequency on the Rapid Line, as well as expanding hours to operate earlier and later at key locations
- Concern regarding increasing conflicts between populations requiring the courtesy seats
- Increased training is being provided to bus operators to improve sensitivity and awareness of perceived and not perceived disabilities

b. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Introduced by John Van Horne, Director, Human Resources.

- The Human Resources Department (HR) covers a broad range of functions, including labour relations, recruitment, compensation, health and safety, and training
- As the City of Nanaimo is a Provincially regulated employer, Federal rules do not apply
- The City collects very little demographic data upon hiring, as it is not required by law, and collecting information that is not required creates increased liability risk
- Internal hiring is determined by language in the collective agreement with the union

- External postings are reviewed to ensure the listed qualifications are truly required for the job
- Qualified shortlisted candidates are set up with a structured interview with pre-set questions and interview panels, ensuring all candidates have the same interview
- HR provides different types of training, including training for job improvement, as well as health, wellness, and compatibility skills
- HR is supportive of providing accommodations for internal and external employees
- HR is working on developing a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy for the organization

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- There is a need for customized opportunities for people with developmental disabilities
- Employment standards for the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities from the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation provides a framework on barriers for finding and recruiting people with disabilities, and to help them grow in those positions
- Suggestion to include training on intersectionality for managers, and offer disability-specific training for staff
- HR Staff are looking at opportunities to partner with an external organization to create short-term work to allow people with diverse abilities to obtain employment with the City and add it to their resume
- Consideration for the City to look at the City of Victoria who has the IMPACT Associate positions

7. REPORTS:

a. Update on Accessibility Improvements to City Parks and Trails

Introduced by Darcie Osborne, Director, Recreation and Culture.

Presentation:

1. Kirsty MacDonald, Parks and Open Spaces Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation. Highlights included:
 - Capital Funding is available to provide accessibility improvements at First Beach at Westwood Lake Park

- Washroom facilities at Westwood Lake Park will be redesigned to be more accessible and gender inclusive, and will include both adult and child change tables
- Later this year, Staff will put out a Request for Statement of Qualifications to allow qualified professionals to submit designs for a new inclusive and accessible washroom facility at Maffeo Sutton Park
- Swy-A-Lana Lagoon, Loudon Park and Westwood Lake Park have been identified to have accessible beach accesses installed
- Create wellness walkways throughout Beaufort Park to provide a trail system accessible by hospital patients
- The Beban Park Masterplan is being implemented through smaller projects, including increasing paved trails around Beban Park, and improving accessibility to the Beban Pool facility
- Looking to increase wayfinding information through an online app for local trails to better identify accessibility levels
- Reevaluating design and maintenance standards for parks and trails to increase visual and physical accessibility
- The City is working with partners such as “Included By Design” to provide more information regarding barriers on trails throughout the region
- Due to natural barriers at Neck Point Park, only certain areas can be made fully accessible
- Although Bowen Park is highly used by seniors, accessibility upgrades are limited to the area around the complex due to natural elements of the park area
- No set area of the Waterfront Walkway has been defined for upgrades yet due to the length of the trail

Committee discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Consideration to move braille washroom signs at Parks and Recreation facilities to allow access to braille when the doors are propped open
- Access to onsite adaptive outdoor equipment would help increase access to trails with limited accessibility
- Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification version 4.0 (RHFAC v4.0) is now available, and the two City Staff who have received certification with version 3.0 will receive

additional training to increase certification to version 4.0 prior to any upcoming facility audits

- Various stakeholders will be included in upcoming facility audits, where appropriate, to ensure accessibility aspects are considered
- Suggestion to provide a website link at park entrances to report barriers at parks and accessibility wayfinding information
- Suggestion to add yellow markers to the stairs at Bowen Park leading from Millstone Avenue to the river
- Improving the sinks at the Maffeo Sutton Park washroom to provide better access to hand washing prior to washroom upgrades
- Facility audit stakeholders should include parents of children with diverse needs as there can be conflicting needs for different families
- “Blue Trunk Travel” provides accessibility information for travelers coming to Nanaimo, and allows individuals to report accessibility barriers online
- Final Westwood Lake Park washroom designs will be provided to the Committee, as well as on-site visits, prior to construction
- Suggestion to refer to the “Building Better Bathrooms” book as a resource for future City washroom upgrades

It was moved and seconded that the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness recommend that Council direct Staff to conduct assessment audits on the following parks, trails and open spaces in 2024/2025:

- Westwood Lake Trail System
- Oliver Woods Park grounds
- Neck Point Park
- Stadium District
- Harewood Centennial Park
- Beaufort Park
- Bowen Park grounds adjacent to the Bowen complex
- Waterfront Walkway

The motion carried unanimously.

(b) Assistive Hearing Devices Update

Darcie Osborne, Director, Recreation and Culture, advised the Committee that following Council's adoption of the Assistive Hearing Devices pilot project, the equipment for the project has been purchased.

8. OTHER BUSINESS:

Karen Robertson, Deputy Corporate Officer, advised the Committee that John Cowan, At Large member, provided his resignation from the Committee, and noted that advertising for a new Committee member will begin next week.

9. QUESTION PERIOD:

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

10. ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved and seconded at 6:00 p.m. that the meeting adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

CHAIR

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

DEPUTY CORPORATE OFFICER