



## MINUTES

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVENESS MEETING

Wednesday, September 10, 2025, 4:01 P.M.

Boardroom, Service and Resource Centre

411 Dunsmuir Street, Nanaimo, BC

- Present: Councillor H. Eastmure, Chair  
Councillor S. Armstrong  
L. Derksen, At Large Member\*  
A. Dillingham-Lacoursiere, At Large Member  
S. Enns, At Large Member  
R. Harlow, At Large Member (entered at 4:02 p.m.)  
B. Kinrade, At Large Member\*  
J. Maffin, At Large Member\*  
S. Pump, At Large Member\* (disconnected at 5:13 p.m.)  
A. Stuart, At Large Member\*  
N. Sugiyama, At Large Member
- Absent: T. Brzovic, At Large Member  
T. Hirasawa, At Large Member
- Staff: L. Bhopalsingh, General Manager, Community Services/Deputy  
Chief Administrative Officer  
D. Osborne, Director, Parks, Recreation and Culture  
N. Vracar, Deputy Corporate Officer  
C. Davis, Deputy Director, Parks and Natural Areas  
L. Clarkson, Manager, Recreation Services  
D. Johnston, Manager, Recreation Services  
K. MacDonald, Manager, Parks Operations  
A. Daly, Recreation Coordinator  
D. Alyward, Recreation Leader III  
K. Lundgren, Zoom Moderator  
L. Young, Recording Secretary

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

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

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

Councillor Eastmure welcomed Lisa Bhopalsingh, General Manager, Community Services/Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, and introduced them to the Committee.

**2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:**

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

R. Harlow entered the Boardroom at 4:02 p.m.

**3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES:**

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness held in the Boardroom, Service and Resource Centre, 411 Dunsmuir Street, Nanaimo, BC, on Wednesday, 2025-JUL-09 at 4:00 p.m. be adopted. The motion carried unanimously.

**4. DELEGATION:**

- (a) Patrick Squire re: Concerns with the Accessibility of Community Engagement Opportunities

Patrick Squire spoke regarding concerns regarding the City's reliance on digital platforms for public engagement which may exclude individuals who do not readily have access to technology. They expressed that switching to modern methods of communication lacks inclusivity and noted past issues such as online-only surveys, being referred to the website for information, and offers to provide information solely through email.

Nikolina Vracar, Deputy Corporate Officer, advised the Committee regarding Staff's response to some of the delegation's concerns as well as the development of new Staff guidelines for informal public engagement.

**5. PRESENTATIONS:**

- (a) Inclusion Summer Program and Camp Sunsatation

Introduced by Damon Johnston, Manager, Recreation Services.

Presentation:

1. Amanda Daly, Recreation Coordinator, and Danielle Alyward, Recreation Leader III, provided an on-screen presentation included in the agenda package. Highlights included:
  - Camp Sunsation is a camp designed for youth with diversabilities who may require one-on-one assistance and the Integrated Program is for youth who can participate in small group care within a large group setting
  - In 2024, Staff piloted running both Camp Sunsation and the Integrated Program side by side to determine how the programs could work together. The pilot was successful and well-received by families and Staff
  - Staff aimed to expand the Camp Sunsation and Integration Program for 2025 to run for the entire summer; however, the request for additional funding from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) was not approved, therefore Camp Sunsation ran for five weeks and the Integration Program ran for four weeks
  - Another inclusive program offered is the Social Club, which runs on Thursdays from September to June. It is offered to teenagers and adults, is free of charge, and participants help plan and lead activities
  - Adaptive skating opportunities continue to be offered in partnership with the Canucks Autism Network. The adaptive drop in hockey program continues to be well attended
  - Staff have explored new inclusive programming such as Silly Saturdays, an open gym program offered at Oliver Woods Community Centre, and the Wednesday Teen Program, a space for teens to lead group activities. Staff will continue to adjust and reoffer these opportunities based on participant feedback
  - Staff received 126 applications for Camp Sunsation and Integration Program this year, and were able to accommodate 115 applicants. A cancellation list was created in order to accommodate some campers on an ad hoc basis
  - Camp Sunsation was located at Ecole Hammond Bay this year, and partnered with a company in Cowichan Valley for bus transportation

- The potential for additional training for camp leaders to address bigger, more violent behaviours as well as supporting campers who are non-verbal or use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices
- Unexpected registration barriers due to the recent Canada Post strike resulted in applications sent by mail being received later than in-person applications and, therefore, being placed lower on the list
- Other barriers identified include limited space in the Camp Sunsatation and Integration Programs, registration being limited to children with active social workers, and challenges with the location and poor cellphone reception
- The development of a Leisure Buddy Program is currently in the exploratory phase

Committee and Staff discussion took place. Highlights included:

- The importance of investing in opportunities to integrate individuals with diversabilities into regular programming, rather than segregated programming
- The potential to partner with organizations to provide additional training to Camp Sunsatation leaders
- Planning is currently underway for inclusion of children and youth who need physical support
- The potential to use other facilities for Camp Sunsatation such as Georgia Avenue School or one of the recreation facilities
- Camp Sunsatation leaders were offered 10 hours of specialized training, in addition to the 20 hours of general summer programming training
- The MCFD has recently changed their policies, so children newly diagnosed with autism are not automatically assigned a social worker, which may affect access to Camp Sunsatation. Staff would like to find ways to expand the program to support those without a social worker
- handyDART was contacted regarding the potential to use their busses; however, they were unable to assist
- The potential to have designated drop-off spots throughout the City where a program leader would meet with campers and chaperone them on transit

- Staff requested the option for families to be able to submit applications online; however, the MCFD is not equipped to support online applications at this time
- Over half of the campers were return campers from previous years, with an increase of teen applications
- The potential to have applications available at schools
- Opportunities to partner with organizations that have busses with lifts that are used less during the summer, such as the Nanaimo Association for Community Living (NACL) or Clay Tree Society

(b) Westwood Lake Park Inclusive Amenity Improvements

Introduced by Charlotte Davis, Deputy Director, Parks and Natural Areas.

Presentation:

1. Kirsty MacDonald, Manager, Parks Operations, provided an on-screen presentation included in the agenda package. Highlights included:
  - The Committee has provided feedback in regards to the Westwood Lake Amenity Improvements project which has made a positive impact on the space
  - Phase 1 of the Westwood Lake Amenity Improvements project focussed on the entrance and the parking lot at First Beach, and included features such as eight accessible parking stalls, and a wide entrance to First Beach
  - Phase 2 of the project was recently completed, which included the addition of a new facility with two inclusive washrooms and adult changing stations
  - New surfaces are smooth with limited joints to avoid catching wheelchair tires or canes
  - First Beach doubled in size and now includes features such as a Mobi-mat, high contrast tiles, and a handrail system to provide easy access to the beach
  - Westwood Lake Park was a pilot for testing new signage standards in City parks. Signage includes braille, high colour contrast, and QR codes for listening to signage information
  - A variety of seating was integrated into the project, such as tables with non-traditional seating areas and backrests on the decking at a variety of angles

- Goals for future upgrades to the park include the integration of shade and shelter spaces, more dock access, and integration of the old washroom space

Committee and Staff discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Additional shaded spaces are anticipated to be added in 2026
- Wood chips used in the park are Canadian Standards Association (CSA) compliant and are free of splinters. Staff have not received complaints regarding wood chips used in the park
- Concerns regarding the turning radius for emergency vehicles in the parking lot, and the importance of consulting industry experts on future projects. Potential to provide additional communication to emergency service providers regarding bollards and routes into the parking lot
- Potential to include spaces for rain shelter for those using the space in the off season

S. Pump disconnected from the meeting at 5:13 p.m.

- Wayfinding and accessible signage will be expanded to the rest of the park, including trails. Additionally, signage between the park and adjacent properties (such as access to Mount Benson) will be added to ensure that signage is clear and navigation is easier
- Suggestion to avoid using armrests on wooden benches everywhere due to the armrests not being suitable for all body sizes
- Staff are continuing conversations with the Regional District of Nanaimo regarding bus routes and stops near Westwood Lake Park
- No decision has been made yet regarding whether the Mobi-mat will stay out year round or be removed during the off season. Mobi-mats need to be replaced more often with additional exposure to the elements
- Concern that the Mobi-mat did not meet the water when water levels dropped; however, Mobi-mats can be extended or repositioned to accommodate fluctuations in water level
- The potential to use the old washroom facility as storage for adaptive equipment

- Staff will return to a future Committee meeting to discuss Phase 3 of the Westwood Lake Park Amenity Improvements project as well as any future audits of the park through the Rick Hansen Foundation

## 6. OTHER BUSINESS:

(a) Correspondence dated 2025-JUL-27 re: Maffeo Sutton Park Accessibility Issues

Charlotte Davis, Deputy Director, Parks and Natural Areas, provided an overview of the correspondence included in the agenda package. Highlights included:

- Clarification that a ticket is not required for the first three hours of parking, and, to Staff's knowledge, 12 vehicles were not towed from the parking lot
- Staff will review parking lot signage to ensure clear messaging and consistency
- The potential to add and prioritize Maffeo Sutton Park to the list of parks audited by the Rick Hansen Foundation in 2026

Committee and Staff discussion took place. Highlights included:

- Drop off services during large events at Maffeo Sutton Park can assist those who may be affected by a lack of accessible parking spaces
- The lack of accessible parking spaces at Maffeo Sutton Park, and the potential to allocate more parking spaces as accessible during events
- Confirmation that Staff will bring forward design options for Maffeo Sutton Park washroom replacements to the Committee in the future

It was moved and seconded that the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness recommend that Council direct Staff to add and prioritize "Maffeo Sutton Park Assessment Audit" to the list of parks, trails, and open spaces being audited by the Rick Hansen Foundation in 2026. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Correspondence dated 2025-AUG-24 re: Bowen Park Accessibility Issues

C. Davis, Deputy Director, Parks and Natural Areas, provided an overview of the correspondence included in the agenda package. They noted that the issues mentioned in the letter regarding accessibility around the lower picnic shelter area at Bowen Park such as lack of accessible parking and lack of

drop off areas are valid concerns; however, these issues are not unique to Bowen Park.

**7. ADJOURNMENT:**

It was moved and seconded at 5:37 p.m. that the meeting adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

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CHAIR

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

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DEPUTY CORPORATE OFFICER