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The Regional Municipality of Durham

MINUTES

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

A meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby at 1:07 PM. Electronic participation was permitted for this meeting.

1. Traditional Territory Acknowledgment

J. McEwen, Chair, read the following land acknowledgement:

The Region of Durham exists on lands that the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg inhabited for thousands of years prior to European colonization. These lands are the traditional and treaty territories of the Nations covered under the Williams Treaties, including the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, Alderville First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, and the Chippewa Nations of Georgina Island, Beausoleil and Rama.

We honour, recognize, and respect Indigenous Peoples as rights holders and stewards of the lands and waters on which we have the privilege to live. In our efforts towards reconciliation, we continue to build and strengthen relationships with First Nations, as well as the growing Inuit communities and large Métis communities and here in Durham. We commit to learning from Indigenous values and knowledge, building opportunities for collaboration, and recognizing that we are all connected.

2. Roll Call

Present: D. Campbell*, Whitby
P. Chandwani, Whitby, Vice-Chair, left the meeting at 2:53 PM
W. Henshall*, Whitby
M. Lloyd*, Oshawa
Councillor McDougall
J. McEwen, Clarington, Chair
S. Sones, Whitby
L. Williams*, Pickering
***denotes members of the committee participating electronically**

Staff

Present: N. Dash, Accessibility Coordinator, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
P. Hines, Manager, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
R. Inacio, Systems Support Specialist, Corporate Services – IT
K. Smith, Committee Clerk, Corporate Services – Legislative Services
***denotes staff participating electronically**

3. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

K. Smith called for nominations for the position of Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Moved by D. Campbell, Seconded by M. Lloyd,
That Jim McEwen be nominated for the position of Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Moved by Councillor McDougall, Seconded by P. Chandwani,
That nominations be closed.

CARRIED

K. Smith asked if J. McEwen wished to stand. J. McEwen indicated he would stand.

J. McEwen was acclaimed as the Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

K. Smith called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Moved by D. Campbell, Seconded by Councillor McDougall,
That Priya Chandwani be nominated for the position of Vice-Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Moved by M. Lloyd, Seconded by S. Sones,
That nominations be closed.

CARRIED

K. Smith asked if P. Chandwani wished to stand. P. Chandwani indicated she would stand.

P. Chandwani was acclaimed as the Vice-Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

J. McEwen, Chair, assumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

4. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Adoption of Minutes

Moved by Councillor McDougall, Seconded by D. Campbell,
That the minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting held on Tuesday, November 26, 2024, be adopted.

CARRIED

6. Discussion Items

A) Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

N. Dash advised that under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the Region of Durham is required to update their Multi-Year Accessibility Plan as the current plan expires in 2025. N. Dash requested one or two Committee members to be part of the planning sub-committee. J. McEwen and W. Henshall offered to sit on the planning sub-committee for the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

N. Dash further advised she will be seeking feedback from Committee members for the survey questions being proposed for the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Discussion ensued with regards to the time commitment for the planning sub-committee; using Ontario Tech University as a resource for recommendations and surveys; who can take part in providing feedback on the survey; and the length of time for the new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to be approved.

B) Nomination Process for AAC Awards

P. Hines advised that feedback was received from Committee members for the nomination process for the AAC Awards and that the number of categories has been reduced and a new scoring matrix has been developed. P. Hines advised that a copy of the nomination process will be shared with Committee members.

P. Hines responded to questions with regards to whether businesses can be nominated for an award; and how time dedication is scored under the new scoring matrix.

C) The Need for More Accessible Housing in Canada

J. McEwen shared an article called More Accessible Housing is Needed in Canada was shared with Committee members.

J. McEwen raised concerns that new housing developments do not require a specified minimum number of accessible units within their project and stated that the need for more accessible units in Durham Region needs to be impressed upon the lower tier municipalities.

Councillor McDougall suggested reaching out to the Durham Home Builders Association for guidance on the number of accessible units required when building homes.

N. Dash advised she would reach out to the Durham Home Builders Association and provide a response to Committee members.

7. Correspondence

There were no items of correspondence to consider.

8. Information Items

A) Education Sub-Committee Update

W. Henshall advised that the group has come up with a mechanism called “Listen, Learn, Collaborate” that will host conferences and activities throughout National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October. There have been preliminary discussions with Ontario Tech University regarding possibly hosting an event during the fall reading week at the university.

Discussion ensued with regards to the accessibility of Ontario Tech University for those attending the event; connecting with the public relations program at Durham College for students to assist with the event; and when a date for the event will be set in place.

B) Update on the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC)

J. McEwen advised that the next Transit Advisory Committee meeting will be taking place on February 18, 2025 and will provide an update at the next meeting. He further advised that W. Henshall and himself will continue to be AAC representatives on the Transit Advisory Committee.

W. Henshall advised that he asked for an update on the training being provided to operators for accessibility as he is still experiencing difficulties.

It was the consensus of the Committee to recess at this time. The Committee recessed at 2:04 PM and reconvened at 2:15 PM.

Following the recess, the Committee Clerk conducted a roll call, and all members of the Committee were present.

C) Accessibility Coordinator Update

N. Dash provided the following update:

- At the Regional Accessibility Coordinators meeting, she provided the Committee’s feedback regarding hosting the networking event in person. Their feedback was to still host the first event online and have discussions at the event on how to make the event work in person for a future event.

Discussion ensued with regards to how the networking event will be facilitated; potential date for the networking event; coordinating events with the lower tier municipalities; and potential venues to host a networking event.

- The Town of Ajax has rolled out the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program and suggested having someone from the Town of Ajax speak to the Committee about it and seek support of the program at Regional facilities.
- Durham Region Transit hosted an Accessibility Forum on January 14, 2025 and suggested DRT staff speak to the Committee to provide an update.

Discussion ensued with regards to sharing the Committee minutes and information with the lower tier accessibility committees; and sharing topics discussed with the Regional Accessibility Coordinators.

D) Black History Month Celebration

P. Hines advised that Durham Region's Black History Month celebration "Together We Rise Durham: Resistance, Resilience, Possibility" is taking place on February 5, 2025 at 5:30 pm at the Audley Recreation Centre in the Town of Ajax. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Andrew B. Campbell.

P. Hines advised she will share the registration link with Committee members.

E) Committee Recruitment Update

N. Dash advised that three new members will be recommended for appointment to Council and they will hopefully be able to attend the next AAC meeting.

9. Reports for Information

There were no reports to consider.

10. Other Business

A) Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

J. McEwen thanked D. Campbell for her work for this year's election of Chair and Vice-Chair. J. McEwen suggested putting together a subcommittee for next year's election of Chair and Vice-Chair.

W. Henshall suggested the current Chair and Vice-Chair provide their experience of being Chair and Vice-Chair to Committee members at the end of the year to provide insight for the next year's elections.

B) The BrailleDoodle

D. Campbell advised that she took a volunteer position on The TouchPad Pro Foundation based out of New York and they have created a product called The BrailleDoodle to help teach braille literacy.

C) Durham Accessibility Conference

P. Hines advised that Durham Region is partnering with the Abilities Centre to host the 3rd Annual Accessibility Conference which is taking place on May 28, 2025 with the theme being Accessibility Employment and Beyond.

P. Hines asked Committee members to advise if they would like to participate in the conference.

P. Hines further advised that there will be a keynote speaker and are hoping to have a virtual segment for this year's conference.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 25, 2025 at 1:00 PM.

12. Adjournment

Moved by M. Lloyd, Seconded by S. Sones,
That the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 2:56 PM

Respectfully submitted,

J. McEwen, Chair, Accessibility Advisory Committee

K. Smith, Committee Clerk