



Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date, Time and Location

Tuesday, July 25, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. at the Town Hall – Conference Room #1

Members

Lori Brant, Chair
Dennis Hernandez-Galeano, Vice Chair
Bev Ferris
Ashley Greaves (regrets)
Adam McLeod (regrets)
Gary Kooistra
Joe Kissman
Marilyn Abbs
Jennica Giesbrecht
Councillor Ann-Marie Noyes

Staff Resources

Keegan Gennings, Chief Building Official
Sean Hutton, Facilities Supervisor (regrets)
Bev Bradnam, Manager, Strategic Initiatives

1) Call to Order

The July 25, 2023 AAC Meeting was called to order at 4:35 p.m.

2) Approval of Minutes

Recommendation No. 1:

Moved by: Dennis Hernandez-Galeano
Seconded by: Joe Kissman

THAT: The June 27, 2023 Minutes of the Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting be approved as printed.

(CARRIED)

3) Douglas Park Master Plan and Sugarbowl Park update

Tikki Yuen, Landscape Architect for the Town, had forwarded the Master Plan of Douglas Park for the Committee's review and noted that the park construction is currently on schedule. The design includes a few "sports facility fit" – pickle ball, basketball and soccer. A washroom building, shade structure and a new playground with accessible rubberized pavement and water play is also part of the construction.

Tikki also provided a site works for the Sugarbowl Park splashpad but advised that this is not the final plan yet. Once Planning has received the concepts from the bidders (playground manufacturers) there will be a public consultation for residents to vote on their preferred play equipment. Bev is also usually on the selection committee for the RFP and requested to be so again.

4) Outstanding Matters

1) Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee

Bev advised that she reached out to the Region's Accessibility Coordinator who advised that Regional Council chose new members on July 20, 2023 and their first meeting will be held on August 15, 2023. Bev questioned if there were any Fort Erie residents represented and was advised that there were none.

2) Parking Concerns

Lori noted that the lot on Lincoln Road East has had the accessible parking space painted but without any other lines painted people parked in behind and she was unable to use the spot. Lori advised that there is no signage notifying that it is a municipal lot and asked that signage be installed as people are using the lot overnight and it looks like it is a private lot. Councillor Noyes advised that there are new parking restrictions for overnight parking and the ability to purchase monthly passes but the by-law may not yet be in place. Lori advised that the Erie Road lot has had the lines repainted and we are waiting to hear about the accessible parking space to be added on Erie Road (on-street parking request as part of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan).

3) Stevensville Garden Gallery

Councillor Noyes advised that the automatic door has not yet been installed. Bev was asked to follow-up with the Gallery.

4) Adult size Change Table at Bay Beach

Keegan advised that the Landscape Architect, Tikki Yuen, was trying to locate another adult size change table and she has been corresponding with Purchasing and Facilities staff. Similar tables are available in the United States but may not meet CSA Standards. Remain on outstanding.

4) Outstanding Matters, continued

5) Stop Gap Ramp Project

Lori and Bev presented details of the StopGap program at the recent Crystal Beach and Ridgeway BIA meetings and had a lot of the members show interest. Bev shared the new web-page with the Committee and the application details. To date 8 requests have been received and the deadline is August 4, 2023. Bev advised that Angela Stadelman was also picking up flyers for distribution to businesses to help raise awareness and interest. Bev advised that she also spoke with the StopGap staff that handles orders and will be targeting the second week of August to do measurements and photos with the help of Communications staff. Discussion took place regarding businesses that may just need a threshold ramp and if funding was left over what the next steps would be. Joe noted that a hairdresser in Fort Erie is difficult to get into; however, the program is only being offered to businesses in Ridgeway and Crystal Beach at this point but if funding is remaining there may be consideration for expanding the area. Bev will follow-up with members once the application deadline closes. Remain on outstanding.

6) Barrel Restaurant Access

No response has been received. Keegan requested a copy of the letter for follow-up. Remain on outstanding.

7) Additional Accessible Parking Spaces at the Leisureplex

Councillor Noyes received a thank-you from Greg Hunter who had initiated the request for additional accessible parking spaces at the Leisureplex, which noted that many people who have mobility issues will be grateful as well during the coming hockey season. Remove from outstanding.

8) Arby's Restaurant

Keegan advised that he received a response from the owner of Arby's acknowledging the need for an accessible parking space and signage and also advised that he is planning to make a barrier free entrance and asked Keegan to meet with him next week. Remain on outstanding until work is done and a thank you letter can be sent acknowledging the improvements.

5) Site Plans

No site plans were presented.

6) Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023

Bev advised that the new web-site meets AODA requirements and has a much easier to use search engine. Council meeting agendas and minutes are also now using E-Scribe, which is an accessible program.

7) Other Matters

1) Crystal Beach Supper Market

Lori advised that she would like to give kudos to the Town regarding the Crystal Beach Supper Market after she had heard that there would be some road closures making access difficult. Lori advised that there will be accessible parking available on site and you just have to show your accessible parking permit at the road blocks to be allowed in to park. As well, the transportation shuttle will be accessible for those that want to park in one of the designated lots. Joe advised that he went down early a few weeks ago and recommended getting there early to get a spot.

2) Accessible Taxi Service

Joe advised that he recently visited a restaurant in Ridgeway and called around for a taxi to bring him home. There were no wheelchair taxis available and he had to contact Niagara Falls taxi to pick him up at 1:00 a.m. (from Ridgeway to Fort Erie) at a cost of \$80.00 Joe asked if we could bring forth a mandate that accessible taxis need to be available later in the evening.

Discussion took place regarding the Region of Niagara licencing taxis and Councillor McDermott's struggle to have taxis in general available in Town, especially for those that may work in places that stay open to 1:00 a.m. or 2:00 a.m. It was noted that the On Demand and FAST service are available until 9:00 p.m. Bev Ferris noted that taxi cab dispatch is from Ottawa and they may not be familiar with the area.

Councillor Noyes advised that she worked with Premier Taxi to provide travel between Port Colborne and Fort Erie and back at a cost of \$40.

Dennis noted that in prior years when we had many bars on Garrison Road that we had quite a few taxis in Town but that is no longer the case and as a private business they do need to make money and can't just be sitting around waiting for a call.

Councillor Noyes noted that next year the transit service is supposed to extend hours to 11:00 p.m.

7) Other Matters, continued

2) Accessible Taxi Service, continued

Bev Ferris advised that she tried to book through Uber Wav recently to get home from a surgery in Hamilton and they advised her that they would be able to do so but would need someone from Fort Erie for the return trip to Hamilton.

Dennis described his use of an accessible taxi a few years ago that charged him \$100 each way from Niagara Falls.

Members noted that there should be no additional cost for a taxi and that requesting an accessible taxi cab should not require payment to get to Fort Erie, especially if we are supposed to have three accessible taxis that have licences in Fort Erie (even though there are no cars here). The Committee felt that the Region should require those licence holders to have cabs in Town if they are issued the licence.

Lori will send a request to Regional Councillor Insinna with some background and request his assistance in finding a resolution that is equitable.

Jennica questioned that under the scope of the AODA, if there is found to be a gap in service, is the Ministry obligated to fill those gaps. Both Councillor Noyes and Keegan described an older building or the stores we are trying to target for the StopGap program, noting that they do not need to make changes but we encourage them to improve access – there is no legislative requirement to do that.

Dennis noted that the Dart system in Hamilton runs to 11 p.m. and he recalled a McMaster fundraiser that he had to leave early from because the service ended at 11 p.m.

Joe mentioned that when taking a Niagara Falls taxi to Buffalo and getting stuck on the bridge you are responsible for the wait time, even if it is 3 hours. It was noted that this is the same for any taxi service crossing the border. Add to outstanding.

3) Bernard Beach

Councillor Noyes shared with the Committee comments made at Council on Monday night related to a presentation on Bernard Beach, noting that when the Mayor saw the boardwalk he noted “that is not accessible”. Bev noted that previously with the higher levels of sand staff had been working on accessible beach mats so that there was a smooth transition but confirmed that there is quite a large gap between the sand and the boardwalk now. Councillor Noyes noted that Council is definitely cluing in to the need for making places accessible.

7) Other Matters, continued

4) Canadian Dragon Boat National Championship

Marilyn advised that at the Canadian Dragon Boat National Championships her Para Standard Dragon Boat Crew (South Niagara Canoe Club) won the very first medal awarded in Canada to a Para Standard Dragon Boat crew. Marilyn noted that this made Canadian history as they are the very first para crew to ever medal, even before the Canadian National Team. Marilyn noted that there continues to be more opportunities to participate in accessible sports and that her boat had a crew of 19, made up of 9 para athletes and 10 supporters. The first race was on Thursday and was a 500 metre race and they were on the water with 3 or 4 other boats and with 250 metres to go they poured it on and edged out the lead boat (made up of 18 years and under) by 2.5 seconds. Marilyn noted that at her age this is like winning Para Olympic gold. Marilyn described how she gets in and out of the boat and the need for stability and taking into account the physical weight of each crew member. Lori congratulated her as Chair and said that it is amazing a) that you do that sport and b) that you come back with such an amazing experience.

Marilyn advised that she will be participating in the Birmingham Tennis Tournament in September 2023, the Canadian Nationals for Canoe Kayak in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia at the end of August and the Canadian National Wheelchair Tennis Championship in Dartmouth in the middle of October.



8) Date for Next Meeting

The next AAC meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, September 26, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in Conference #1.

9) Adjournment

Recommendation No. 2:

Moved by: Bev Ferris
Seconded by: Marilyn Abbs

THAT: The July 25, 2023 meeting of the Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee does now hereby adjourn at 6:14 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by:

Minutes approved by:

Bev Bradnam, DPA, CMM III
Manager, Strategic Initiatives

Lori Brant
Chair