



MINUTES

Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting Date, Time, and Location	
Tuesday, January 31, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. at the Town Hall – Conference Room #1	
Members	Staff Resources
Dennis Hernandez-Galeano, Chair Bev Ferris, Vice-Chair Gary Kooistra Adam McLeod Barbara McLeod (regrets) Lori Brant Veronica (Faith) Sparling Councillor Ann-Marie Noyes Ashley Greaves (regrets)	Keegan Gennings, Chief Building Official Sean Hutton, Facilities Supervisor Bev Bradnam, Manager, Strategic Initiatives Guests: Jennifer Pennell-Ajie (to 4:37 p.m.) Joe Kissman Lauren, PSW

1) **Call to Order**

The Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

2) **Approval of Minutes**

Recommendation No. 1:

Moved by: Adam McLeod
Seconded by: Lori Brant

THAT: The November 29, 2022 Minutes of the Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting be approved as printed.
(CARRIED)

3) **Transit Update**

Jennifer Pennell-Ajie, Executive Assistant to the Director of Infrastructure and Division Coordinator (previous Transit Supervisor), provided an update on Fort Erie’s conventional and specialized transit transfer to Niagara Regional Transit that took place on January 1, 2023. Jennifer advised that Fort Erie residents are still receiving service from Regional Limousine (On Demand) and the BTS Network (FAST).

3) **Transit Update, continued**

The new web-site was reviewed and Jennifer noted that Fort Erie's transit web-site is now redirected to the new site. Jennifer advised that to book a ride using the telephone number, it is important to listen to the full menu (Fort Erie service – Press 3). Jennifer advised that nothing has really changed with the transfer to the Region and the old telephone number is still live and you can still purchase smart cards using cash, debit or credit card and they can still be purchased at Fort Erie libraries and at the Town Hall at the Customer Service Unit.

Jennifer advised that service improvements may include later service hours and Sunday service but at present service in Fort Erie remains status quo.

Jennifer advised that to utilize specialized transit an application must be submitted to the Niagara Region Transit. Bev B. noted that the Fort Erie AAC used to be the Appeals Committee for FAST if someone wanted to appeal a decision. Jennifer advised that if the required medical professional has signed off on the application there would be no need for any type of appeal. Bev B. asked about the Universal Support Pass that the Region had instituted a while back and Jennifer advised that the application is available and it is also identified on the specialized transit application. Councillor Noyes stated that sometimes a support person isn't always necessarily needed, depending on the type of use (i.e. doctor's appointment, shopping, etc.) and she questioned if someone could write in occasional. Lori questioned the booking for specialized transit. Jennifer advised that they set out booking 48 hours prior for planning but that you can also call the day of and if there is room they will accommodate the rider. The Region does state that bookings for specialized transit are only up to two weeks as they were overwhelmed; however, BTS is still operating under the Fort Erie contract. Niagara Specialized Transit (NST) can also connect with Hamilton specialized transit.

The transit website can be found at nrtransit.ca.

Jennifer noted that the General Manager of the new transit commission is Carla Stout who was the previous Transit Supervisor for the Town.

Jennifer noted that Fort Erie's ridership numbers are 52% higher than pre-pandemic numbers.

Adam questioned if fares are increasing as he heard that they are going from \$3 to \$6. Jennifer advised that local fares (within city/town) are \$3 and Regional fares (outside the city/town) are \$6, with discounts on the regional fares for seniors and youth.

Jennifer left the meeting at 4:37 p.m. The Chair was turned over to Dennis.

4) **Outstanding Matters**

1) Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee

Faith advised that she has not received any notification for applying to the Region of Niagara's AAC but has heard that meetings will be held exclusively by zoom.

4) **Outstanding Matters, continued**

2) Parking Concerns

Jarvis Street reconstruction and streetscaping is nearing completion. Bev B. also noted that discussions related to parking in Crystal Beach are taking place and improvements to municipal lots are planned for 2023.

3) Fort Erie Active Transportation Committee (FEAT)

Dennis advised that the Fort Erie Active Transportation Committee has not had quorum and have been unable to meet. Dennis advised that one member has left, there presently is no Council member assigned to the Committee, and the youngest member is currently overseas.

4) Stevensville Garden Gallery

Councillor Noyes advised that automatic doors have not been installed at the main entrance and noted that there are sliding doors inside the building from the main area to the patio area. Bev B. was asked to follow-up with the Gallery. Remain on outstanding.

5) Adult size Change Table at Bay Beach

Bev B. advised that this matter is on hold as there are a number of vacant staff positions in the Planning Department. An update response was provided to the individual who had brought this matter to the Committee's attention advising of the delay due to staffing. Dennis noted that the Bay Beach parking lot has been replaced and the accessible parking spots are wonderful. Remain on outstanding.

6) Stop Gap Ramp Project

Bev B. advised that due to her recent surgery she has not moved the project any further but did share a recent conversation with a local restaurant owner who would also be interested in the program. Lori noted that it would also be useful to have the Town Solicitor present at the meetings with the BIA members to explain the lengthy agreement required between the business owner, the Town and the Stop Gap Ramp organization. Bev advised that currently the Solicitor position is vacant. It was agreed that a smaller sub-committee would be established to work on this project once the 2023 – 2026 AAC Committee members are in place.

5) **Site Plans**

1) 3819 Hibbard Street

Keegan reviewed the site plan for 19 town house units to be built between Hibbard Street and the Friendship Trail. There is one accessible parking space shown in the visitor parking lot and Committee members agreed that it should be moved to the other end of the lot for easier access to all of the units. Keegan noted that there is no parking allowed on the laneways and no sidewalks shown on the site plan. Dennis noted that the FEAT Master Plan recommends sidewalks in all new developments.

2) Impacts of Bill 23 – *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*

Bev B. advised that the Provincial group she is a member of (Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals) had reached out to see what everyone's thoughts were on Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*, as it relates to consultation with AACs on site plans. Keegan advised that the Bill has taken some of the applications required to go through site plan process out of the mix (i.e. plans with 10 residential units or less no longer requiring site plan review). Councillor Noyes noted that an open house may also not be required but Keegan confirmed that it would depend on the zoning and if an application plan would still be required (i.e. if it is in an RM zone and permitted then it would not have any type of public process). Faith asked if Fire Safety would still be considered and Keegan advised that Fire Safety is still under the Building Code and regulated through the Building Permit process.

6) **Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023**

Bev B. advised that she went to Council with the Annual Status Report and planning for the next Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2024-2029) will begin later in 2023.

7) **Other Matters**

1) Volunteer Applications for next term of Council

Bev B. advised that the Terms of Reference for the AAC are being developed, noting that the Committee was established by By-law in 2002. Applications for the Committee for the 2023-2026 term of Council are due by February 17, 2023. Hard copies were made available at the meeting.

2) Niagara Parks Annual Accessibility Public Information Session

Bev B. showed the slide deck received from the Niagara Parks Commission that highlighted their annual Accessibility accomplishments. The tunnel under the falls was featured and Councillor Noyes noted that there are no washrooms on that floor and it does take 20 minutes there and back so be prepared.

7)

Other Matters, continued

2) Niagara Parks Annual Accessibility Public Information Session, continued

Committee members were happy to see that the paving stones along the pathway to the Floral Showhouse were removed and replaced with smooth asphalt making it easier to access the Floral Showhouse. Councillor Noyes noted that she recently visited the falls and they had difficulty crossing due to traffic and noted that there should be a cross walk. Committee members noted that the improvements made at Table Rock have a signaled crossing now.

3) Accessible Canada Directorate – Webinar Series on National AccessAbility Week

Bev B. provided an overview of the webinar hosted by the Accessible Canada Directorate that showcased three projects that were funded during National AccessAbility Week.

- Project – Identity, Empowerment and Awareness through Story-Telling – Northwest Territories Disabilities Council;
- Teegatha'oh Zheh presents 'Our Stories'; and
- Manitoba Possible – Mpower: Accessibility Challenge.

Bev advised that the last presentation spoke to what our AAC has always said – start with the youth. The three components of the Challenge were to raise awareness, project development and prizes. Over 700 schools were part of the outreach and opportunities for leadership were provided within the disability community. Students with disabilities became leaders in some of the projects while making lasting changes within their school community. Bev read the following quote that was part of the presentation and represented a letter to teachers from one of the individuals who used their prize money to provide educational books for students in his school division:

“Younger children tend to be very accepting children, and if we can change the way people see children with exceptional needs at a young age, we are making a difference. Please accept these books from me, as a gift to your classrooms. We already have so many challenges ahead of us in life, so being “different” should not be one extra challenge that students have to face. No one should be left behind because of their differences. It starts early in the classrooms. Inclusion will drive change.”

4) The passing of the Honourable David C. Onley

Details were provided on the passing of the Honourable David C. Onley. Mr. Onley served as the province's Lieutenant Governor from 2007 to 2014. He was the first person with a visible disability to hold the post and worked tirelessly to break down barriers for people with disabilities.

Committee members met Mr. Onley at the Provincial session that took place in Burlington several years ago and a picture of Barb and Adam meeting him was shared.

8) **Date for Next Meeting**

The next AAC meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in Conference #1.

9) **Adjournment**

Recommendation No. 2:

Moved by: Adam McLeod

Seconded by: Bev Ferris

THAT: The January 31, 2023 meeting of the Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee does now hereby adjourn at 5:42 p.m.

(CARRIED)

Meeting minutes recorded and prepared by:

Meeting minutes approved by:

Bev Bradnam, DPA, CMM III
Manager, Strategic Initiatives

Dennis Hernandez-Galeano
Chair