

Meeting Date, Time, and Location

Tuesday, January 28, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. in Conference Room #1 at Town Hall

Members	Staff Resources
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Dennis Hernandez-Galeano, Chair
 Bev Ferris, Vice-Chair
 Gary Kooistra
 Adam McLeod
 Barbara McLeod
 Lori Brant
 Faith (Veronica) Sparling
 Steve Gucciardi, Transit Representative (regrets)
 Councillor Ann-Marie Noyes (regrets)

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

Guest:

Janine Tessmer, Communications Advisor (to 5:49 p.m.)
 Nola Polger, Coordinator, AODA, Niagara Parks Commission (to 5:49 p.m.)

1) **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:12 p.m. The order of the agenda was altered to allow the Niagara Parks Commission presentation as the second agenda item.

2) **Niagara Parks Commission Annual Accessibility Public Information Presentation**

Nola Polger, Coordinator AODA, from the Niagara Parks Commission provided an overview of the NPC's Annual Accessibility presentation and showcased all of the great things that the NPC has done to create a more inclusive visitor experience in Niagara.

Highlights include:

- ❖ Sidewalks were widened along the parapet wall, from Table Rock north to Queen Victoria Place and along River Road, from John Street to Bridge Street. This will assist with travel along the water, especially with the increased pedestrian traffic from the GO station;
- ❖ Accessibility upgrades to washrooms at the Floral Showhouse, Laura Secord Homestead, and McFarland House;
- ❖ New design of Table Rock Shop includes widened aisles, additional lighting, lower shelves, new large changeroom with proper turning radius, lowered counters at the checkout and a beautiful ramp around the turret for everyone to use;
- ❖ Elements on the Falls was redesigned and renamed to the Table Rock House Restaurant with a newly ramped entrance for everyone's entrance, new ramps to window seats, braille menus and staff that are trained to accommodate needs. The grand re-opening was in the spring.

2)

Niagara Parks Commission Annual Accessibility Public Information Presentation, continued

- ❖ An analysis was conducted of all of the parking spaces and was increased to compliment and meet Design of Public Spaces standard. 42 new accessible spaces with proper signage were created with both Type A and Type B spaces.
- ❖ April 11 and 12, 2019 - ParaSport Ontario hosted a unique two-day festival in Niagara Falls that celebrated diversity through accessible sport and recreation programs that included students, educators, community leaders, politicians, and organizations committed to providing more opportunities for inclusive activities in Southern Ontario. The NPC was a part of the planning and had two teams in the Corporate Challenge. Sixteen NPC staff achieved their Inclusion Coach Certification and NPC also received an Ontario Community Impact Award for the continuous work to make Niagara parks more accessible.
- ❖ Added and improved the signage at Whirlpool Golf Course to provide direction to the accessible entrance;
- ❖ A new Work Order System was implemented and any items dealing with accessibility are provided directly to Nola as a priority. Nola then reviews and works with staff or contractor, as required, so that the issues can be solved as soon as possible and this also ensures that staff have their eyes open for any barriers.
- ❖ In the summer new pop up retail kiosks were located at the Grandview Plaza, at the bottom of Clifton Hill, with ramped entrance and hand rails. Nola noted that they were so popular more might be placed this year.
- ❖ An intercom system was installed at the base of the front steps of the Police Building for instant access to seek help when needed (staired entrance).
- ❖ The NPC Customer Service team fields hundreds of calls re accessibility and from Oct. 1, 2019 to date they have received 705 accessibility-related enquiries such as questions about support persons, wheelchair rentals, access for attractions, WEGO bus information, standing times and distances between attractions, where to park and the parking policy.
- ❖ New mobi-mats were rolled out at the Rooted Festival, an annual celebration of the natural, cultural and culinary profile of the Niagara Region, which includes a variety of workshops and activities. This year's festival included accessible and inclusive yoga and a picture was shown that included Lori.
- ❖ At the Butterfly Conservatory, new accessible doors were placed in the staff entrance.

Nola advised that items that are in progress include barrier free washrooms and an accessible playground at Kingsbridge Park, which will include an adult change table. Barb noted that it is great to see adult change tables now being installed and described her struggles with a grown son when adult change tables were not available. Nola confirmed that they also placed adult change tables at Grandview and Table Rock.

Dennis questioned the use of the zipline and if the NPC kept track of how many people with disabilities has participated. Nola explained that it is a third party that runs the ride but it is the second most asked inquiry that is fielded regarding access for attractions. Nola explained that a person with a disability must have control of their upper body to go on the ride as they need to be able to transfer in and out of the ride and the individual's mobility device is then shuttled to the base of the ride. Lori suggested that a video be made and posted on the NPC website to cut down on the number of calls and show how accessible the ride is.

3)

Communications Advisor presentation to Niagara College Students on Accessible Documents

Janine Tessmer, the Town of Fort Erie's Communications Advisor, described her role on the Niagara College Public Relations Program Advisory Committee and this year she will be presenting to the post graduate program a session on accessible documents. Janine reviewed the power point presentation that she will be providing to students and asked that AAC members remember that most students are in their early 20's. The presentation included the following slides as well as a 1% motivational message that Bev read aloud:

- ❖ Why is accessible communications important?
- ❖ Why people don't comply?
- ❖ Who's your audience?
- ❖ Website & Online video
- ❖ Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
- ❖ Accessible content on websites
- ❖ Online videos
- ❖ Documents
- ❖ Accessibility Checker
- ❖ Lists & Tables
- ❖ Assistive Technology and Tables
- ❖ Using Styles & Headings
- ❖ Alternative Text
- ❖ Hyperlinks
- ❖ Clear Language
- ❖ Design, Fonts, Colour, Using Colour, Colour Contrast, Colour + Texture
- ❖ Final Thoughts

Bev noted that Janine has been responsible for revamping the Town's advertisements that in the past were so small to read as well as close captioning the Town's Council meetings. Dennis questioned if there has been any thought to descriptive video and Janine advised that the Town's closed captioning provides a detailed recording of the presentations and commentary that takes place at Council but does not describe non-speech type noises or actions that occur.

Dennis questioned if they are teaching graphic design students about the AODA, noting they should for those that may work with branding/marketing companies in their future careers.

Janine advised that she will be using the Town's Community Guide with the students to show them an accessible publication.

Both Janine and Nola left the meeting at 5:49 p.m. Committee members thanked them both for their presentations.

4) **Approval of Minutes**

Recommendation No. 1:

Moved by: Lori Brant
Seconded by: Adam McLeod

THAT: The December 3, 2019 Minutes of the Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting be approved as printed.

(CARRIED)

5) **Outstanding Matters**

1) Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee

Faith advised that the last Regional AAC meeting included the consultant for the bus consultation calling in for a special meeting as the Regional AAC felt they had been left out of the consultation. With respect to the accessible bus demo, Faith noted that no one is speaking about it and Bev was asked to follow-up with her counterpart at the Region to see if they had moved away from the bus that isolated persons with disabilities.

Faith advised that there was also discussion about the third party that would be reviewing applications for specialized transit and the requirement for a person with a disability having to show up and be interviewed by the individual. Bev F. noted that it is an age old problem having a clerk who is not qualified in the medical field making decisions and turning people down if the application doesn't exactly match the criteria. That is why having a medical practitioner complete the form is important and would also ensure that the system isn't abused.

2) Parking Concerns

Bev B. described a concern that was brought to her attention in June regarding a lack of accessible parking in Ridgeway that she had then forwarded to the Town's Traffic Coordinating Committee (TCC) for review. The TCC advised that it would work with our Committee and the Town's multi-year Accessibility Plan included recommendations to review parking in downtown areas. The Plan was passed in December and this meeting is the first opportunity to discuss locations. A map of Ridgeway was pulled up on the screen and the Committee agreed that two additional accessible spaces should be located in front of the Post Office and in front of the CIBC. Bev noted that it will be up to Engineering to determine how the spaces could be accommodated with the current sidewalks (curb cuts, etc.). Lori recommended that curb cuts be placed across the street from each of the accessible spaces to make it easier to cross and Dennis suggested lines in the road to represent a crosswalk. The AAC passed the following recommendation:

5) **Outstanding Matters, continued**

2) Parking Concerns, continued

Recommendation No. 2:

Moved by: Lori Brant

Seconded by: Bev Ferris

THAT: based on the recommendation approved by Municipal Council contained in the 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and discussions with the Town of Fort Erie’s Traffic Coordinating Committee, the Accessibility Advisory Committee recommends that two accessible parking spaces be created in downtown Ridgeway in front of the Post Office and in front of the CIBC Bank, and further

THAT: the Town’s Engineering Department works takes into account the best practices for the Design of Public Spaces as may relate to on-street accessible parking design, and further

THAT: consideration be given to providing a curb cut on the opposite site of the road from the new accessible space to allow for easier crossing, and further

THAT: consideration be given to creating a crosswalk to allow for safer crossing for persons with disabilities in the Ridgeway downtown core.

(CARRIED)

Lori advised that the curb cuts on Erie Road were once again not cleared off. Bev advised that she would notify the Operations Manager and ensure that staff clearing the sidewalk are made aware of where the curb cuts are located. The AAC looked at the on-street parking on Erie Road and recommended that an accessible space be placed near 4028 Erie Road businesses and that a concrete landing be included so that a ramp can be deployed easier and access to the sidewalk would be seamless. Keegan asked how the sidewalk operator would know to plow a landing and may have to hand shovel it off; however, it was noted that there would be signage showing that it is an accessible parking space. Keegan stated that there should be revised engineering requirements to extend a sidewalk to a landing pad for accessible spaces when there is a grass boulevard between the sidewalk and the road.

Recommendation No. 3:

Moved by: Lori Brant

Seconded by: Barbara McLeod

THAT: based on the recommendation approved by Municipal Council contained in the 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and discussions with the Town of Fort Erie’s Traffic Coordinating Committee, the Accessibility Advisory Committee recommends that an accessible parking space be created on the south side of Erie Road nearest 4028 Erie Road and that consideration be given to a concrete landing that connects to the sidewalk for a seamless transition.

(CARRIED)

5)

Outstanding Matters, continued

3) Fort Erie Active Transportation Committee (FEAT)

No updates were provided.

4) Letter to 660 Garrison Road re Life Labs

Keegan advised that the new owner came back in to see him to discuss the thresholds for the doors and the ramp. Work will be done in the spring. Remain on outstanding.

5) Community Theatre – Greater Fort Erie Secondary School

Keegan advised that he has spoken with the contract lead and the handrails are to be installed by the end of February. Remain on outstanding.

6) Accessible Taxi Cabs

No updates were provided. Remain on outstanding for Councillor Noyes' return.

7) 238 Bertie Street – Request for Funding

Bev advised that she was in the Medical Centre last week and work has not yet begun on the washroom. Keegan advised that the owner has spoken with him but no building permit has been applied for. Remain on outstanding.

8) Hand Rail – Town Hall

Sean advised that they are still waiting. Remain on outstanding.

9) Telephone at Leisureplex

Sean advised that the phone has been lowered. Dennis asked if a buzzer would have been better so that children did not have unnecessary access and Sean advised that the staff carry phones, which ring when the telephone in the atrium is accessed. Remove from outstanding.

10) Niagara Parks Commission Annual Accessibility Public Information Centre

Bev F. and Gary were to provide a review of the information provided at the NPC's meeting at our December 3, 2019 AAC meeting; however, they were unable to attend. Nola Polger provided the entire Committee with an overview of the presentation (see Item 1.2). Remove from outstanding.

6) **Site Plans (if applicable)**

Keegan provided two site plans for review.

1) 1141 Ridge Road North

Keegan advised that the site plan shows a medical marijuana facility that has a front section of offices, a turn-around for deliveries and two accessible spaces. Keegan noted that the parking area is gravel. Dennis questioned what was next to the two accessible spaces and Keegan confirmed that there are garbage cans to the west of the spaces. The AAC requested that hatch marks/aisle way be provided between the two spaces so that a ramp can be deployed. Keegan noted that the facility will be gated and not open to the public.

2) 2555 Ott Road

The site plan submitted by the Friends of Fort Erie Creeks shows the outline of a 30' x 60' building and a gravel parking area located on the Stevensville Conservation Authority property. Keegan advised that he has been told the building will be used for storage, an educational area and may house labs for testing. Keegan advised that there is no delineated parking and he is unsure of the full extent of the use of the building or if it will be open to the public. Faith asked if there are any additional requirements if the group fundraises or uses funds provided by the public. Keegan will follow-up on the use.

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

A list of the public comments received during the MYAP consultation were provided to the Committee and reviewed to determine if any action can/should be taken on each comment received. The Committee provided commentary on items 1-12 under the “barriers to municipal services” from the Ridgefest consultation, as follows:

COMMENTS RECEIVED	AAC COMMENTS/DIRECTION
1. I like the parking by the hospital; signage needs to be improved throughout Town – maybe use pictures that clearly show things	Provide comments re signage to Infrastructure Services to be considered as part of the Wayfinding Program
2. None (recorded several times by participants) – which is a great sign that we are on the right track!	Acknowledges that the AAC is on the right track.
3. Building permits when access improvements are needed; insurance delay assessments (grandson in bad car accident and delay in having daughter’s house renovated to allow him to come home) – Town should help those that need assistance.	It was noted that the delay was with the insurance company and not the Building department. Details released from the March of Dimes Home and Vehicle Modification Program (discussed further under Other Matters) will be provided to Keegan so that they can be made available in the Building Department.

7)

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023, continued

COMMENTS RECEIVED	AAC COMMENTS/DIRECTION
4. Great beach mats! Community came together - if possible, do more at other waterfront locations.	Great feedback on the mobi-mats and the Manager, Community Planning confirmed that additional mats will be purchased in 2020 for Bay Beach and two other waterfront locations.
5. Needs something off a dock or platform that would allow for a transfer chair into the water; a lot of people are intimidated by the big bus – not sure how many riders we have but do we need such a big bus? Should have a van for Saturday events that runs late – Head Injury Association would have a car load – wouldn't mind helping with fundraising.	Provide comments related to transit to Jennifer Pennel-Ajie, Transit Supervisor, who is looking into alternate modes of transportation for residents. Sean confirmed that we only have one public dock at the Crystal Beach Waterfront Park, all others are privately owned.
6. Print – eyes – make sure we have large print.	Town policy requires 12 Arial font for print and will accommodate requests for larger print or any other alternative format that assists individuals when requested.
7. Large print is good	We all agree that large print helps everyone!
8. Curb cuts that are coloured for persons with low vision that can't see it or can't see the walkway; put AAC agenda on with minutes; have meeting between Town Committees so they can come to Council as a group with one voice.	The AAC had Angela Stadelman at a previous meeting to discuss the painting of curb cuts and worked with the Clarion to ensure that the Community Health Centre curbs were painted. Discussion took place regarding the posting of the agenda and members felt that it was sufficient to post just the Minutes. The AAC meets the last Tuesday of each month and persons can attend. Town Committee Chairs related to Human Services have met to discuss how they can better collaborate and share what each Committee is doing. Minutes of all Committee meetings are also posted on the Town's webpage (Council minutes and agendas).
9. "Anti-dog"; bus route takes 1.5 hours to get from Stevensville to YMCA – moved here from New Market to help mother who couldn't get anywhere (explained to her about FAST service – she stated that information should be in the doctor's office and applications there too – she didn't know anything about that); slow down new building – cut off the neck of luxury homes – not enough affordable housing	The Town has a leash-free park at the Sugarbowl Park and are also including a leash free park at the Crystal Ridge Community Park. Service animals are permitted in any public space. The Transit routes have been altered and FAST applications are available online and at the Doctor's offices in town. It was noted that Council has included Affordable Housing in their 2018-2022 Corporate Strategic Plan and the recent Expression of Interest for the Ridgeway Crystal Beach High School property included affordable housing as a main criteria for development. The Town Council also established an Affordable Housing Committee.

7)

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023, continued

COMMENTS RECEIVED	AAC COMMENTS/DIRECTION
<p>10. Wheelchair accessibility in playground – engineered wood fibre is awful (has a young son in a wheelchair) – more features needed that are universal; everything else is fairly good.</p>	<p>Dennis stated that he agrees that the engineering wood fibre is not accessible, even if it is packed down. Bev F. stated that her scooter would also not be able to access the playground but her scooter also has difficulty on grass, Sean was asked if there is any other material considered accessible for playgrounds and responded that there is the engineered wood fibre or rubber matting which could cost more than the entire playground. Sean also said that they have to test the fibre regularly and if it is too compact they have to rototill or add more fibre. Bev mentioned that, at her provincial meeting, playground equipment companies presented and stated that the engineered wood fibre is the most accessible and cost efficient.</p>
<p>11. Good at the arena and the Town Hall – generally very pleased with Fort Erie as opposed to Ridgeway as there is only 1 handicap parking spot (public) in Ridgeway – no spot outside the post office.</p>	<p>As noted, the AAC is recommending the addition of two accessible spaces in Ridgeway: 1 at the Post Office and 1 in front of the CIBC bank.</p>
<p>12. More benches are needed. Charge station to recharge wheelchair and scooter batteries.</p>	<p>This discussion related to downtown Ridgeway and the need to be able to charge a scooter in the downtown core. It was noted that some individuals use the plug at the Beer Store or at the Market. Benches are available in the Ridgeway Civic Square and continues to be part of the memorial bench program.</p>

The remainder of the items will be discussed 10-12 at a time at future meetings. It was agreed that the Ridgefest consultation was a great opportunity to hear and interact with the community and all agreed that we should continue this practice each year, asking the same questions to determine how far we’ve come and what still needs to be addressed.

8)

Other Matters

1) Left of Central

Bev shared a newspaper article about the new café and board game social club created by TASC. Members will plan a visit to the café in the near future and take some AAC swag.

8) **Other Matters, continued**

2) The Business of Accessibility–How to Make Your Main Street Business Accessibility Smart

Bev shared a recent publication by the Ontario BIA Association that provided some great tips for businesses on improving access. The AAC asked that Bev share the publication with the BIA's and the Chamber of Commerce and post it on the AAC's webpage. The publication also had a checklist for accessible documents that will be provided to Janine for her presentation to the students.

3) March of Dimes – Home & Vehicle Modification Program

Bev advised that a recent email from the Province had a link to the March of Dimes Home & Vehicle Modification Program. Keegan asked that the details of the funding be provided to him so that he can make them available at the Building counter.

9) **Date for Next Meeting**

The next AAC meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, February 25, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. in Conference Room #1.

10) **Adjournment**

Recommendation No. 2:

Moved by: Adam McLeod

Seconded by: Gary Kooistra

THAT: The January 28, 2020 meeting of the Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee does now hereby adjourn at 6:54 p.m.

(CARRIED)

Minutes recorded and prepared by

Minutes approved by:

Bev Bradnam, DPA
Manager, Strategic Initiatives

Dennis Hernandez-Galeano
Chair