

**Accessibility Committee Meeting
August 18, 2021
Town Council Chambers & Zoom**

Present

Mayor L. Boucher
Councillor M. Farrell
Councillor D. MacInnis
G. Mattie

S. Scannell, Community Development
D. Wilson, Deputy Clerk

Absent with Regret

K. Stewart
G. Kell

Also Present

J. Littlefield, Upland Planning & Design

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM and noted the only item on the Agenda is a review of the Accessibility Planning Engagement Summary being presented by J. Littlefield.

Approval of Agenda

"It was Moved and Seconded to approve the Agenda as presented." Motion carried.

Brief discussion took place attempting to ensure the timing of the meeting meets with the needs of the Committee members.

Approval of Minutes

It was Moved and Seconded to approve the Minutes of the June 15, 2021, Accessibility Committee meeting as presented." Motion carried.

• **J. Littlefield – Accessibility Planning Engagement Summary**

The Chair welcomed J. Littlefield to the meeting and invited her to present the findings on the Accessibility Planning Engagement Summary.

J. Littlefield provided comment on the main themes of what the firm found and provided brief comment on the Introductions.

The Committee was advised that participants comprised 58 individuals from 43 organizations, including group as well as individual one on one discussions with some limitations including impact of the pandemic and isolation issues.

While stakeholders identified great assets in the community, many stakeholders indicated lack of response to some accessibility issues (lack of prior action). She noted the importance of understanding the lens that is being looked through. It was noted that other organizations are also working on accessibility plans, and spoke to a 'shared' accessibility coordinator or coordination.

Key themes included awareness and education and the need for work around definition (full scope) as well as a need for education around various disabilities and stigmas association with disabilities and discrimination.

J. Littlefield noted that each of the categories include recommendations such as staff training and improved transparency to the public.

Goods & Services – One key takeaway is the need to ensure those with disabilities have access to their basic needs (impacted by covid) (ie. reliable access to home care) and suggestions to 'community care'. Access to recreational programming was identified as an issue.

Information & Communications: Recommendations include improvements to access to information (online and in person) and making effective use of alternative information.

Transportation – Stakeholders involved in employment services noted that access to transportation is the main barrier to employment. Comment was provided on access to Antigonish Community Transit, accessible parking and issues related to sidewalks/walkways (built environment)

Employment – overlaps with accessibility. Some suggested that there is a lot of misunderstanding around disability and employment and a need for employees to have a better understanding.

Newcomers to Canada have similar issues as those with disability related to employment (employers don't know where to start – need for education).

Built Environment – The main takeaway is how discrimination is built into the built environment and the need to go beyond requirements. Businesses, housing and recreation were identified as areas open for improvement.

J. Littlefield noted she would like to see the Accessibility Planning Engagement Summary on the Town's website and shared with stakeholders, and requested any concerns be identified. It was generally agreed to try to wrap up comments within the next 2 weeks.

J. Littlefield noted there will be a link between this document and actions moving forward. She noted she will share feedback with other organizations working on accessibility plans and further noted she will have suggestions on town procedures.

S. Scannell provided comment on what was heard versus what will be included in the recommendations and/ or draft plan and noted recommendations will include actions the town can take individually.

J. Littlefield noted that the committee could start thinking about the Draft Open House which will include a number of activities, follow up stakeholder calls and an open house. It was noted it was generally agreed to have a six (6) week notice in advance of the Open House.

The Chair thanked J. Littlefield for her presentation and it concluded at 2:42 PM.

Mayor L. Boucher stated there is a lot of work to be done and spoke briefly to people's perceptions of what the Town is doing. She noted that in the past few years Council has acted on many recommendations and need to work toward gaining the trust of the accessibility community.

Mayor L. Boucher stated it is her hope that Council will see the benefit in moving forward and making a noticeable welcoming community over the next few years.

CAO J. Lawrence provided comment and noted Council needs to budget according to what they can accomplish.

G. Mattie noted that the community also needs to take some ownership with accessibility.

It was generally agreed that all of Council should have an opportunity to review, provide comment and have a meaningful discussion on moving forward.

S. Scannell provided comment on moving forward. It was suggested that the document be shared with all of Council and seek comment and/or concerns from Council.

S. Scannell agreed to distribute the document to Council and request their comments/feedback come back in the very near future.

It was generally agreed to work towards a date for the open house (likely mid-October).

It was noted that the Town will likely have their accessibility plan together within the timelines set out.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:58 PM.