

**Accessibility Committee Meeting
Feb 28, 2025
Town Council Chambers**

Present

Chair, Councillor Patrick McKenna
Mayor S. Cameron
G. Mattie, Committee Member

M. Fougere, Deputy Clerk
S. Long, Acting Director of Community Development

Absent with regrets

G. Kell, Committee Member

1. Call to Order

Chair, Councillor P. McKenna called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM

2. Approval of Agenda

It was Moved and Seconded “to approve the agenda as presented.”

Motion Carried

3. Approval of Minutes

It was Moved and Seconded “to approve the March 6, 2024, minutes, as presented.”

Motion Carried

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

4.1 Accessible Antigonish

The group Accessible Antigonish, an informal committee coordinated by Randy Crouse, was reviewed. This group supports local accessibility improvements and provides recommendations to enhance inclusion across the community.

S. Long updated the Committee on ongoing partnerships and funding opportunities, including a joint initiative with the County of Antigonish to procure an accessible picnic table for the mini-pitch area.

Additional discussion focused on the potential for dedicated budget allocations to support broader accessibility projects in the upcoming fiscal year.

Councillor P. McKenna will contact Randy Crouse to explore how Accessible Antigonish could collaborate more formally with the Accessibility Committee.

The committee discussed ongoing accessibility challenges in the Town, including issues related to curb cuts, sidewalk conditions, and general mobility concerns.

Crosswalk Accessibility and Safety Improvements were discussed. A damaged flashing crosswalk beacon was identified as a priority for replacement; funding for this has already been allocated.

A recent crosswalk study recommended relocating certain crosswalks to enhance accessibility and pedestrian safety.

The Committee considered installing new crosswalk beacons and exploring further funding to expand improvements in high-traffic areas.

Concerns were raised about pedestrian safety during winter months, particularly regarding visibility and sidewalk maintenance in the downtown core.

The Committee discussed future budget allocations to support enhanced accessibility, including the addition of accessible crosswalks and parking improvements.

5. New Business

5.1 Accessibility Committee Mandate and Terms of Reference

Chair, Councillor P. McKenna reviewed the updated Accessibility Committee mandate and terms of reference and suggested that the document be circulated to members for review and feedback before formal adoption.

5.2 Update on the Accessibility Plan due April 1st, 2025

The Committee discussed key priorities for the Town's Accessibility Plan, which is due by April 1, 2025, in accordance with provincial requirements.

A deadline of March 7, 2025, was set for committee members to provide feedback to S. Long on the document.

The committee identified a gap in defining clear staff responsibilities for accessibility coordination.

Discussion took place regarding the feasibility of appointing an official Accessibility Coordinator or designating responsibilities within the existing staff structure.

Members agreed that priority levels for accessibility projects should be clearly defined, with realistic short-, medium-, and long-term goals.

The need for consistent funding and integration of accessibility considerations into all town projects was emphasized.

Staff will circulate the final Accessibility Plan and ensure it is accessible on the town's website.

Follow-up discussions with stakeholders, including community groups, on accessibility priorities.

Review funding opportunities for accessibility improvements in the next budget cycle.

Committee members shared personal experiences or observations of accessibility barriers, particularly in public spaces and businesses.

Mention of a past wheelchair experiment to help officials understand accessibility challenges firsthand.

Discussion about ensuring accessibility at town meetings and events, including advanced promotion to allow attendees to arrange transportation.

Concerns about Columbus Field and its poor accessibility were raised, with ideas about securing funding for improvements.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) is being developed for redesigning the first floor of the town hall for accessibility improvements, including washrooms, lighting, sound, and door access. Concerns that full renovations may not be feasible due to budget constraints.

Discussion on acquiring an easement for a property next to the town hall to ensure continued access.

Chair, P. McKenna made a recommendation for staff to investigate securing an easement to the side entrance of the Town Hall closest to the accessible side entrance.

Recommended Motion

It was moved and seconded “That staff investigate in securing an easement to the side entrance of the Town Hall closest to the accessible entrance.”

Motion Carried

Issues raised about the location and dimensions of accessible parking spaces. Discussion took place, including the need for wider spaces and better placement.

Concerns about malfunctioning parking kiosks and potential expansion of mobile payment options was discussed. Potential expansion of the Hotspot parking app for more convenient payments.

Consultation with experts is expected to finalize updates before presenting them to the council.

The province is requiring all municipalities to update their accessibility plans this year, even if their current plans are recent.

Discussion about testing a new provincial emergency and notification app that municipalities could use.

Concerns were raised about a driveway built right up to a building without a setback. Discussion about setback requirements in town and county regulations, especially for new developments.

Mention of potential future changes, such as repurposing large properties like RBC if banks go fully virtual.

A discussion with consultants on expected amendments will influence final meeting dates.

Karen Stewart expressed interest in reapplying for the committee.

The committee seeks diverse representation, particularly for those with different impairments. Example given distinguishing stair edges using color contrast in public buildings.

The Town may become a test municipality for a new provincial emergency notification app. The app would provide location-based alerts, improving communication for residents.

Issues with crosswalk signals and pole placements causing accessibility challenges.

5.3 Future Meeting Dates & Times

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 21 at 1:00 PM.

Chair. P. McKenna would like to have the meetings on the third Friday of the month at 1:00 PM.

6. Adjournment

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 1:55 PM