

**Advisory Committee on Accessibility
Minutes**

Date: Monday, March 21, 2022
Time: 5:00pm
Location: Zoom
Co-Chairs: Robert Hunn & Nahid Verma

Members present:

Nahid Verma (Co-Chair)
Ayush Patel
Bob Hunn
Dasola Dina
Edward Lau
Councillor Isa Lee
Jewell Lofsky
Kaushi Ragunathan
Michelle Del Carmen
Michelle Tremblay

Regrets:

Kim Adeney

Guests:

Dana Honsberger, Project Manager, Sustainability & Asset Management
Joanne Kinya-Baker, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Specialist

Staff:

Mona Nazif, Senior Manager of Human Resources
Laura Gold, Council and Committee Coordinator
John Britto, Committee Secretary (PT)

TOPIC	DISCUSSION	ACTION
1. Call to Order	The Advisory Committee on Accessibility convened at 5:06PM with Nahid Verma in the Chair. The City's Indigenous Land Acknowledgement was read.	
2. Goodbye Bob Hunn	Mona Nazif, Senior Manager of Human Resources welcomed fellow member and current Co-Chair, Bob Hunn who has been a member of the Markham Advisory Committee on Accessibility since 1985.	

Nahid Verma, Chair and other Committee members expressed their sincere appreciation for the many years of dedicated, outstanding and selfless service by Bob Hunn to the Markham Committee on Accessibility.

Laura Gold, Council and Committee Coordinator advised that Bob was Chair of the Committee from December 1998 to March 2008, Co-Chair from March 2008 to May 2009, Vice Chair from May 2009 to May 2021, after which Bob stepped up to be Co-Chair until the end of his term in March 2022. Bob has been in a leadership role for the entire time he has been on the Accessibility Committee and has made outstanding contributions to the Committee. One of many of Bob's achievements was his appointment as the Accessibility Representative on the Markham Centre Advisory Group which he served for many years. Bob has been an active member and was always committed to accessibility, providing insightful remarks in discussions particularly in reviewing site plans. Bob was part of a team that initiated the Markham Accessibility Awards which was previously the Board of Trade Awards.

Mona read the many messages posted by Committee members on the Teams Chat Box expressing their thanks and gratitude to Bob for his outstanding contributions to the Markham Advisory Committee on Accessibility.

On behalf of the Committee, Mona thanked Bob for sharing his expertise and his lived experience with City staff and Committee members over many years he has served and led the Committee, helping to create a legacy of positive impact on Markham communities in the area of accessibility.

Bob responded by advising that he received greetings and a plaque from the Mayor. He mentioned that he has been on the Markham Accessibility Committee for over 25 years and has seen the Town of Markham transition into City of Markham. He thanked everyone, including the Mayor for the kind words of appreciation.

3. Civic Centre Audit – Status Update

Mona Nazif, Senior Manager of Human Resources introduced Dana Honsberger, Project Manager, Sustainability & Asset Management who provided a status update on the Civic Centre Audit.

The following were the accomplishments of 2021:

- Installed touchless door openers, light switches, touchless faucets & toilets
- Implemented daily walkthroughs to ensure door operators are working and looking for any obstacles
- Requested heavier mats from the supplier to help reduce tripping hazards
- Relocated some of the occupied signs for universal washrooms to make them more visible
- Installed high contrast-coloured materials on meeting room floors to eliminate tripping hazards
- Wall hazards are being removed or identified with hazard signs and / or coloured tape
- Interior trees in the main area of the building will be trimmed annually to remove protruding branches.

Dana advised that in 2022 it is proposed to engage a consultant to assist in the design and construction of:

- Furniture layouts, obstacles and other obstructions at all building entrances.
- Accessible customer service desk at the Cash counter.
- Wayfinding signs, step risers with contrasting colour and handrails between seating levels in the Council Chamber.
- Seat quantity and layout, entrance spacing design for mobility devices, open planter hazards and podium area restrictions in the Chapel.

Dana further advised that once the above works have been completed with the consultant, staff will be able to ascertain what can be accomplished with the current budget allocation and anything that is unachievable will be slated for 2023. Staff will be conducting ongoing audits of accessible parking spot designations in all City-owned parking lots in order to identify those that do not meet current accessibility standards and work towards rectifying any anomalies.

Responding to a question from Nahid Verma, Chair of the Committee, Dana advised that approximately 30% of the list of recommendations have been completed. Nahid suggested that a list of completed tasks be provided for the benefit of the Audit Committee. Dana agreed that such a list can be provided.

Responding to a further question from Nahid about meeting rooms being more accessible post-pandemic, Dana advised that it is not readily known how the City proposes to move forward in terms of staff returning in person, but there is a likelihood of meetings being held on a hybrid model.

Responding to a question from Jewel with respect to accessible door openers to the Council Chamber and the Chapel, Dana advised that the prioritizing of specific work is dependent on the current budget allocations, however, based on the Committee’s suggestions, such works could be re-prioritized, and budgets allocated accordingly.

Responding to questions from Edward Lau, Dana is not aware of audits that have been conducted, such as the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification.

Mona Nazif, Senior HR Manager advised that the audit conducted by the Accessibility Advisory Committee was more on the facility and not the services. She further advised that the Auditor General made a presentation and submitted a detailed report to General Committee on the [AODA Accessibility Compliance Audit](#) that was performed at the City. Mona agreed to provide this information to the Accessibility Advisory Committee potentially at its next meeting. Mona advised that the Committee can review the presentation and report of the City’s Auditor General.

Michelle Tremblay suggested that work on the Chapel should be prioritized considering that this is the place where lifelong memories are created in weddings/award ceremonies, special days, etc. Dana advised that work on the Chapel has been listed as one of the big budget items for 2022. Dana further advised the Committee to let her know of any items that needed to be prioritized.

Dana to provide a list of outstanding items for the Audit Committee.

Dana to provide a list of completed tasks.

Mona to provide details of the AODA Compliance Audit report and presentation made at the March 21 General Committee meeting.

	<p>Responding to a question from Jewell Lofsky with respect to the Building Department’s involvement in such works, Dana advised that the Asset Management Department is responsible for retrofits and renovations, whereas the Building Department is responsible for new constructions.</p> <p><i>Moved by: Jewell Lofsky</i> <i>Seconded by: Michelle Tremblay</i> That the work on making the Chapel more accessible to persons with disabilities be prioritized.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Carried</p>	
<p>4. Diversity Action Plan Update</p>	<p>Mona Nazif, Senior Manager of Human Resources introduced Joanne Kinya Baker, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Specialist who made a presentation on the City of Markham’s Diversity Action Plan and Anti-Black Racism Action Plan.</p> <p>Joanne advised that the objectives of updating the Diversity Action Plan is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expand its scope to include the Anti-Black Racism Action Plan • reflect the experiences and needs of Markham’s diverse communities at an individual and intersectional level • a living action plan that evolves with Markham while delivering concrete outcomes • a monitoring plan that follows up on progress towards success • use of evidence-based processes and tools • shared and accessible language. <p>In 2009, Markham was one of the early signatories of the Canadian Municipalities to take concrete steps in building a barrier-free society where everyone has equal opportunities to participate in its economic, political, social, cultural and recreational life to reach their full potential. It was then called the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CMARD). The CMARD was extended to include the LGBTQ+, persons with disabilities, and other equity deserving and historically marginalized groups. The expansion of this</p>	

mandate gave a lot of meaning to the diversity, equity and inclusion work that lived outside of race and race relations.

She advised that the City devised a logo of a tree and explained how the tree represents the evergreen nature of the process, the journey, the metaphor of change and the right conditions necessary for growth (cohesion, allyship, harmony and understanding intersectionality).

She provided the Committee with statistics on the results of a survey of residents that indicates 57% said that City services are inclusive, 43% believe that there are opportunities to share their feedback and ideas, over 60% believe that the City has made efforts to improve or to promote awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion, more than 75% reported that they felt safe in Markham, over 80% felt that their neighbours treated them with respect, more than 75% are not afraid to make a complaint to the City, and some residents also said that the City does a good job in promoting belonging and celebrating different cultures.

The Diversity Action Plan update project is being conducted in partnership with the Diversity Institute attached to the Ted Rogers School of Management and it includes a separate component for the development of an Anti-Black Racism Action Plan that includes residents who identify themselves as belonging to the Black community. The study reviewed work done in other municipalities and what has evolved over the past ten years. The research also covered how Markham's social demographic levels have changed over time. Internally, the study connected with the various City Departments, Council and its committees, and staff leaders to understand how the municipality navigates the idea of how the City can be more equitable and inclusive as well as identifying gaps that exist in the community.

A series of ten community consultation meetings were held to seek feedback from the community through which compelling stories were heard and staff have learned how we can continue to do better. The project is currently at a stage where information and feedback received is being analyzed and best practice solutions are being put in place. The research conducted used a trauma-informed based approach where a Councillor was available during all sessions to ensure community members felt supported and safe.

An [Introduction to Markham's updated Diversity Action Plan and Anti-Black Racism Action Plan](#) was presented to the March 21, 2022 General Committee.

Joanne further advised that through this process staff heard from the community their feelings on the ideal community that really embodies the values of diversity, equity and inclusion. Staff will use these values to include them in their processes to ensure that we are living by these key values. Some of the values heard were empathy, fairness, inclusion, accessibility, allyship, representation, multiculturalism, equity, diversity, cohesion, accountability, harmony, acceptance and intersectionality. Staff have realized that a lot of communities are working in different silos and working on issues that are community based and all these communities expressed the need to be able to support and understand what other communities are experiencing.

Joanne advised that the project's guiding principles include to:

- Foster allyship and social cohesion
- Promote feelings of belonging in all City services, programs and initiatives
- Enhance representation of all communities in City initiatives, with intentional effort for intersectionality
- Commit to developing and strengthening community partnership
- Foster ongoing dialogue with communities and commit to education and awareness of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility
- Ensure inclusive and equitable distribution of, and access to, services and inclusive communications that engage all Markham residents and
- Uphold transparency and accountability in all actions, including by collecting disaggregated data on community experiences.

Joanne further advised staff are working on the following areas of focus for the Diversity Action Plan which are categorized based on themes:

- Service inclusion and accessibility
- Community engagement and ongoing dialogue
- Attracting, retaining and promoting diverse talent
- Inclusive recreation: arts, sports, trails and playgrounds
- Inclusive entrepreneurship and business support for the black community

- Affordable and accessible transportation and housing
- Safety for the black community and
- Inclusive resource management and financial transparency.

Joanne alluded to the following anti-Black racism shared understandings:

- Eliminating systemic and institutional racism, such as, systems, policies and practices, interpersonal racism through raising awareness, education and changes in attitude
- Diversity within black communities
- Acknowledging historical incidents of racism, addressing current anti-Black racism, and developing solutions for the future and
- Providing opportunities for the Black community to engage in City initiatives and share perspectives while ensuring barriers are removed to do so.

Responding to a question from Dina Dasola with respect to community feedback on the accessibility action plan, Mona Nazif advised that accessibility deserves to be articulated in the same sentence as diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism, which has been included in the Diversity Action Plan.

Commenting on the work done by staff, Edward Lau stated that it is only a matter of time that the various sports activities will become more accessible to persons with disabilities.

Responding to a question from Nahid Verma, Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Joanne advised that staff are in the early stages of the process and staff have compiled a series of outcomes that will be measured in an accountability matrix. The first draft was presented to General Committee and staff will be reporting back to Council and on ratification staff will continue to expand on the action plan over a set period of time.

Michelle Tremblay complimented staff on including affordable and accessible housing for persons with disabilities. She alluded to a documentary produced in Toronto that includes lived experiences of anti-Black racism in the workplace which could be a good educational tool. She agreed to provide Joanne or anyone

	<p>else interested with contact details of the editors and producers of this documentary film.</p> <p>Responding to a question from Ayush Patel with respect to established partnerships, Joanne advised that she is happy to connect with him offline to explore possibilities of connecting with the Economic Development Department on the entrepreneurial component of the project on how to align the diversity, equity and inclusion goals that have been set out.</p> <p>Responding to a question from Dasola Dina on the collection of data, Joanne advised that staff are in the process of collecting disaggregated data, details of which are also available on the City’s website. Staff are anticipating that the need for this collection will be realized across the municipality and at some level, staff will be able to influence partners in the community to continue to do the same.</p> <p>Nahid Verma complimented Joanne and her staff on the excellent work done on this project. She suggested that Joanne present an update on the project at a future Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting.</p> <p>Joanne suggested that Committee members can provide feedback and / or questions to diversity@markham.ca which are received by her directly and she will be happy to respond.</p> <p>Moved by: Councillor Isa Lee Seconded by: Michelle Tremblay</p> <p>That the presentation by the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Specialist and the comments and discussion by the Committee was received.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Carried</p>	
<p>5. Approval of Advisory Committee on Accessibility Minutes & Review of Action Items</p>	<p>Moved by: Ayush Patel Seconded by: Jewell Lofsky That the Minutes of the February 28, 2022, Advisory Committee on Accessibility, be approved as presented.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Carried</p>	

	<p>Review of Action Items: Mona Nazif, Senior Manager of Human Resources advised that she is working on a tent, a banner and a logo. Jewell Lofsky advised that she was informed by Laura that the banner can be found in a cupboard in the office on the main floor across from the accessible washroom. Mona advised that a 10 x 10 foot tent is being purchased. There will be an ability to have a City of Markham logo and also the ability to hang Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee banners on two different areas of the tent. She further advised that she is trying to acquire this in time for summer events after COVID.</p>	
<p>6. Subcommittees Plan Updates</p>	<p><u>Audit Committee:</u> Kaushi Raghunathan advised that Kim Adeney has completed the Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee. She further advised that the audit committee is considering using the Rick Hansen Foundation’s audit checklist.</p> <p><u>Community Outreach Committee:</u> Edward Lau advised that the priority of the Community Outreach Committee is to work on the National AccessAbility Week celebrations. Michelle Tremblay is coordinating with Salina from the Markham Library. The Committee is also working on how to utilize the various virtual communication platforms and will provide updates to the Committee.</p> <p><u>Social Media & Communications Committee:</u> Ayush Patel provided an update on the work he is doing on a communications strategy and will provide a further update as soon as that is ready hopefully in a couple of weeks. He further advised that he is working on a blurb for an upcoming event in June which he has shared with the Social Media & Communications Committee and will update the Accessibility Advisory Committee on this, as well.</p> <p>Nahid suggested that Ayush share these details with the Chairs of the other Committees so they can review the materials in time before the next meeting.</p> <p><u>Invisible Disabilities Committee:</u></p>	

	<p>Michelle Del Carmen advised that the Invisible Disabilities Committee is scheduled to meet on April 5. She advised members to review the Terms of Reference so that document can be finalized and provided to Mona Nazif.</p> <p>Nahid Verma suggested that the Chairs of the different Committees work together to eliminate duplication in the work being done and also requests being sent to City staff. She agreed to take notes at the Chairs Committee and send the consolidated request to staff.</p>	
<p>7. New Business</p>	<p>Councillor Isa Lee advised that she attended the CPAC meeting last week where a lot of issues relating the accessibility were discussed. She also advised that the Chair of the Markham Committee of Accessibility will be receiving an invitation to attend these meetings.</p> <p>Mona Nazif, Senior Manager of Human Resources advised that Dasola Dina and Edward Lau have volunteered to represent the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee on the Unionville Main Street Reconstruction project.</p>	
<p>8. Adjournment</p>	<p>The Advisory Committee on Accessibility adjourned at 6:58 PM.</p>	
<p>Next Meeting Date</p>	<p>The next meeting of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility will be held on April 25, 2022.</p>	