

Town of Markham
Advisory Committee on Accessibility
Wednesday, February 16, 2011, 3:30 p.m.
Canada Room
Minutes

Committee members present:

Councillor Valerie Burke
Councillor Alan Ho
Sidney Polak - Chair
Carl Bodnar
Jaqueline Bell
Prescott Harrison
Robert Hunn
Joan Jenkyn
Rhonda Jacobson
Carole Robertson

Staff present:

Warren Rupnarain, Accessibility Coordinator
John Ryerson, Director of Culture
Don Taylor, Manager, Executive Operations
Laura Gold, Council/Committee Coordinator

Regrets:

Rhonda Jacobson
Jocelyn Horsford

The Advisory Committee on Accessibility convened at 3:41 p.m. with Mr. Sidney Polak presiding as Chair.

1. REVIEW OF THE MINUTES

On page one of the minutes “had” was changed to “has”.

Moved by Prescott Harrison
Seconded by Carol Bodnar

That the Minutes of the January 19, 2011 Advisory Committee on Accessibility be adopted as amended.

CARRIED.

2. PRESENTATION ON CULTURAL PLAN

Mr. John Ryerson, Director of Culture, spoke about Markham’s Culture Plan. The Committee’s input on making culture in Markham more accessible was requested. Culture was defined as how people relate to one another. Culture provides opportunities for people to learn through music, dance and art. Creative industries strengthen the economy and tourism. Creative people help build a creative economy. Mr. Ryerson advised that he was in the process of conducting interviews and holding workshops on culture and creativity, as part of the public outreach being conducted in the formulation of Markham’s Cultural Plan.

The Cultural Plan looks at making Markham’s cultural venues more accessible to all. It was discussed how it is challenging for someone with mobility issues to get to Markham Theatre, as there is no sidewalks along highway 7, the bus does not go directly to the Theatre, the bus has limited hours of operation, and there are no benches for patrons to sit on if they get tired walking from the bus stop to

the Theatre. It was noted that the Theatre is investigating the possibility of having additional accessible seating and that the Theatre has a stair lift that can be used to bring patrons with mobility issues closer to the stage. It was noted that the location of the lift was not optimal for a person with a disability. Staff advised the Cultural Plan is addressing these types of issues by looking at ways to make people feel as if they belong at Markham's cultural venues.

It was discussed how buildings would be more accessible to residents if the accessibility of the building was rated. A system could be established to clearly rate the accessibility of a building. This would help remove barriers for individuals with accessibility challenges by providing more information regarding where they are able to go. The Cultural Plan creates opportunities to make culture more accessible to all. The usage of language will also be reviewed as part of the Cultural Plan. It was reported the Varley Art Gallery has recently started an art therapy program and a sensory program for the visually impaired.

A Member noted that movie theatres could be encouraged to have more descriptive movies and libraries could have more talking books for the visually impaired. There are numerous existing programs in Markham that could be more effectively promoted to the public. It was recommended that an Advisory Committee on Accessibility Representative be added to the composition of the Building a Creative Markham Advisory Committee.

Moved by Joan Jenkyn

Seconded by Carol Bodnar

That the composition of the Building a Creative Markham Advisory Committee be revised to include a representative from the Advisory Committee on Accessibility Committee.

CARRIED.

3. CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES

The Committee reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility. The Committee requested that Mr. Bill Wiles, Manager of By-Laws & Enforcement, be invited to an upcoming meeting to provide an overview of the Town by-laws that enforce the accessibility of Markham services and facilities.

The following roles and responsibilities were reviewed from the Advisory Committee on Accessibility Terms of Reference:

Responsibility 1. a)

- a) **A report on the measures the municipality has taken to identify, remove or prevent barriers to persons with disabilities.**

It was noted that one of the biggest barriers for people with disabilities was the barrier to employment. A suggestion was made for the Committee to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities.

Responsibilities 1. b) to e)

- b) The measures in place to ensure that the municipality assesses its proposals for by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities.**
- c) A list of the by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services that the municipality will review in the coming year in order to identify barriers to persons with disabilities**
- d) The measures that the municipality intends to take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities; and**
- e) All other information that the regulations prescribe for the purpose of the plan.**

Discussion on responsibilities 1. b) to e)

The Committee thought having well communicated accessible customer service standards was an important aspect of improving residents' access to services. It was noted that Markham has accessible customer service standards that are currently being reviewed. Staff advised that many issues are handled through standard practices and policies rather than through the passing of a by-law. The Committee requested that the Accessibility Plan template be updated to include a list of programs, policies and by-laws regarding accessibility, which stipulates when they were last updated. It was noted that the Plan is now only required to be updated every five (5) years.

Moved by Carol Bodar

Seconded by Carole Robertson

That the Advisory Committee on Accessibility recommend that the Accessibility Plan Template be revisited to include a more comprehensive list of Town by-laws, programs, policies, practices and services that exist to make Markham services and facilities more accessible to people with disabilities, in line with the roles and responsibilities outlined in the Committee's Terms of Reference.

CARRIED.

Responsibility 2.

- 2. To review the Site Plans and Drawings of new or renovated municipal buildings and structures or parts thereof.**

It was noted that a deputation is being made on March 27 or 28 in regards to improving the site plan process. Staff are preparing a verbal response to the deputation. Mr. Warren Rupnarain, Accessibility Coordinator, was requested to contact the Clerk's Department to schedule the deputation. Mr. Rupnarain and Mr. Polak will meet after the meeting to discuss the deputation.

The formulation of a Barriers Sub-Committee was discussed to allow proper time to address barriers not available to the ACA. Its roles and responsibilities could include: looking at windrow plowing; reviewing site plans and proposals; investigating parking issues; promoting services to people with disabilities; and

bringing back recommendations to the Committee. It was noted that Markham currently provides windrow plowing services to seniors and to people with disabilities.

The Business Sub-Committee will handle all aspects of the Markham Board of Trade Award.

Responsibility 3.

3. To appoint the Chair of the Committee as Markham's representative on the Region of York Accessibility Advisory Committee.

This responsibility was no longer applicable to the Advisory Committee on Accessibility.

Responsibility 4.

4. To review proposals and plans for new and major renovation projects (in consultation with architects, designers, developers, operators and municipal staff) in order to ensure barrier-free access and services through the Town of Markham.

It was noted that the Committee should focus on only a few items, as it only has eight (8) or nine (9) meetings per year. The focus should be on Town wide projects. It was suggested that accessibility standards be created for developers to assist them in the creation of their site plans. It was suggested that Mr. Biju Karumanchery, Senior Development Manager, be contacted to obtain a list of major projects the Town is currently working on.

It was reported that the Committee also provides advice to other Town Committees by having a representative from the Committee serve on the Committee (e.g. there is an Accessibility Representative serving on the Cycling & Pedestrian Advisory Committee who provides input on the accessibility of trails and pathways).

It was recommended that a Member be appointed to review weekly Standing Committee Agendas on the Town's website. The Committee Clerk advised that she would provide a demonstration at the next meeting regarding accessing Standing Committee agendas on the Town's website. In addition, to providing instructions on how to listen to the meeting live from your desktop computer via audio-cast. A Committee Member was requested to be assigned to this task. It was noted that Site Plans should be reviewed early in the planning process or when it is still feasible to make changes to the Plan.

Responsibilities 5. and 6.

5. To conduct periodic audits of public facilities and recommend accessibility retrofits.

6. To conduct periodic audits on business establishment as agreed upon.

Discussion on Responsibilities 5. and 6.

It was suggested that that the Committee periodically go to public facilities and business establishments to conduct a site audit.

Responsibility 7.

7. To encourage the adoption of innovative design principles that allow for full access; to acknowledge (through publicity and/or awards) examples of outstanding projects.

It was reported that the adoption of innovative design principles could be advocated through the Award the Committee is working on in partnership with the Markham Board of Trade, which awards businesses that have made accessibility a priority.

Responsibility 8.

8. To advocate, promote and support programs and initiatives for persons with disabilities.

It was reported that the Committee could handout brochures at events and through associations in Markham.

4. NEW BUSINESS

a. NATIONAL QUALITY INSTITUTE COMMUNITY ACCESSIBILITY AWARD

Members were requested to nominate businesses that have demonstrated excellence in providing customer service to people with disabilities for the National Quality Institute Community Accessibility Award. The program sponsoring the award is called 'PEOPLE ACCESS Making Accessibility Easier'. It is funded through the private sector to help implement accessible customer service principles. The Committee Clerk was requested to circulate the nomination forms to the Committee.

b. BOARD AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

The Committee Clerk reported that recruitment for the Advisory Committee on Accessibility will start on February 17, 2011. Members wishing to serve another term on the Committee were requested to submit an application form.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Advisory Committee on Accessibility meeting adjourned at 5:29 pm

Attachment: Outstanding Items List (updated on February 22, 2011)

1. Promotions and Business Initiatives Subcommittee

- a) Brochure: Interested Committee members distributed brochures at Markville Mall.
- b) Insert in Markham Life Magazine
- c) ACRA nomination for Markham business achievement in public service
- d) Board of Trade Awards: invite winner to AAC meeting to celebrate the achievement.
- d) submit nominations for the National Quality Institute Community Accessibility Award.

2. Outreach Subcommittee

- a) Councillor Alan Ho to liaise with other organizations in such events as roundtable meetings and breakfast meetings
- b) Joining the Coalition of Ontario Accessibility Advisory Committees. Warren will provide more information regarding the benefits of joining.

3. Barriers Subcommittee

- a) Subcommittee developing a checklist of principles and features including the Markham Accessibility Guidelines, to provide consistency in the reviews.
- b) Motion at November, 2010 meeting:
That representatives of the Advisory Committee of Accessibility work with Town staff to rectify the current situation at the new development on Highway 48, south of Major Mackenzie Drive, and prepare for a deputation to the Development Services Committee by the end of March, 2011, to present the Committee's concerns regarding development that ignores accessibility issues.
- c) Warren Rupnarain will contact Biju Karumanchery to obtain a list of major projects the Town is currently working on.

4. Opportunities Subcommittee

- a) Compile a list of opportunities for consideration.

5. AAC membership renewal of terms

Clerk provided forms for Members to reapply.

6. Lack of accessible parking on Main Streets in Unionville and Markham.

Markham BIA has attended to discuss parking issues. AAC members were encouraged to attend a future BIA meeting and submit an article for their newsletter. (Rhonda, Jaqueline and Sidney to attend)

Unionville BIA attended in September, 2010 and encouraged AAC to work on parking and washroom issues with the Town.

7. Main Street Environmental Assessment

Warren and Markham BIA to coordinate efforts to ensure accessibility issues are not missed. A presentation was made in June, and Dale MacKenzie will make a further presentation with design details.

8. Bench Installation

Investigate/arrange presentation in April/May on practices regarding installation of benches along sidewalks, in malls, and other locations, and what funding is available.

9. Toronto Parking Regulations

Disabled parking is permitted in any "no parking" areas in Toronto. Gord Landon offered to bring this matter forward at the next Parking Advisory Committee meeting.

10. Heritage/BIA

- Staff to provide info on coordination of accessibility and heritage in the Niagara-on-the-Lake area (Warren)
- Update on the BIA mandate to be provided following Council/BIA workshops

11. Staff presentations

It was requested that Mr. Bill Wiles, Manager of By-Laws & Enforcement be invited to an upcoming meeting to discuss by-laws enforcing the accessibility of services or facilities in Markham.

12. Focus 2011

13. Accessibility Plan

Update template to include a comprehensive list of services, policies, practices and by-laws enforcing accessible services and facilities for persons with disabilities in Markham.

14. Appointment of Member

Appoint a Member of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility to the Building a Creative Markham Committee.

15. Schedule Deputation

Schedule the deputation being made in March to discuss improvements to the Site Plan process.

16. Demonstration to Committee

The Committee Clerk will do a demonstration on accessing Standing Committee Agendas on the Town's website and on listening to the meeting via audio-cast.