

Town of Markham
Advisory Committee on Accessibility
Wednesday, June 15, 2011, 3:30 p.m.
Canada Room
Minutes

Committee members present:

Councillor Valerie Burke
Councillor Don Hamilton
Councillor Alan Ho
Sidney Polak, Chair
Jaqueline Bell
Prescott Harrison
Carole Robertson

Staff present:

Boyd Dire, Project Manager
Dale Mackenzie, Capital Works
Susan McGrath, Provincial Offences Officer
Supervisor
Warren Rupnarain, Accessibility Coordinator
Don Taylor, Manager, Executive Operations
Laura Gold, Council/Committee Coordinator

Regrets:

Robert Hunn
Joan Jenkyn

The Advisory Committee on Accessibility convened at 3:35 p.m. with Mr. Sidney Polak presiding as Chair.

1. MAIN STREET MARKHAM DESIGN DETAILS

Mr. Dale Mackenzie, Capital Works, provided an update on the design details for Main Street Markham. Some of the accessibility considerations included adding urban rail to the sidewalk design, which was described as plain white sidewalks with a dark unistone curve. This type of sidewalk helps the visually impaired and their guide dog see the curve line by creating a contrast. Designated parking spots will also be placed in front of the buildings on Main Street Markham. It was noted that the parking spots should be located close to the curve cut.

There was a discussion about making some of the older stores more accessible. In accordance, with the Building Code, older buildings must have an accessible washroom when renovated to be fully accessible. It was questioned what fully accessible means. Members felt it would be sufficient for businesses to have a folding ramp for patrons with a disability to use to enter the store. The Committee felt that this was an opportunity to work with existing store owners to improve the accessibility of their businesses.

Mr. Mackenzie was requested to report back to the Committee at the next stage of the design process. It was requested that the drawings be digitally enhanced and described to the Committee.

Moved by Councillor Don Hamilton
Seconded by Carole Robertson

That Town Staff encourage existing businesses to explore accessibility opportunities during the planning process for the design of Main Street Markham.

CARRIED.

2. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Mr. Boyd Dire, Project Manager, Portal, displayed the accessibility features on the Town's new website being launched next week. The features included: the ability to increase the font size; and the ability to change the contrast of the site so that it is easier to read for the visually impaired (note: the Canadian National Institute of the Blind was consulted on the contrast of the site). It was noted that the Town investigated the possibility of having an audio site reader, but it decided it was not feasible at this point in time. Other interesting features included a translation feature, which is powered by Google and provides a machine translated version of all website text. The Committee was advised that the accessibility page can be updated through the Accessibility Coordinator.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – MAY 18, 2011

Moved by Councillor Don Hamilton

Seconded by Councillor Alan Ho

That the Minutes of the May 18, 2011 Advisory Committee on Accessibility be approved as presented.

CARRIED.

4. ACCESSIBILITY OF THE UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT AND CIVIC CENTRE

The accessibility of the underground parking lot at Markham Civic Centre was discussed. It was noted that there are no designated spots for people with a disability, but that it was possible for a person with a disability to park in two (2) spots. Some of the barriers preventing volunteers with a disability from parking underground in the evening hours included: that you need an automatic door opener to access the underground parking lot; the doors are very heavy and there are no automatic door openers; the volunteers would need to prearrange with security to park underground; communicating this parking arrangement to Senior Staff and Councillors with assigned parking spots in the underground parking lot; and the underground parking lot is already being used on some evenings. Warren Rupnarain was requested to investigate this matter further.

There was a discussion with respect to allowing taxis to park directly in front of the entrance at Civic Centre. It was clarified that taxi drivers will not be ticketed if they are helping a disabled person enter the building.

Note: After the meeting the Committee Clerk discussed this matter with the Manager of By-Laws & Enforcement. The matter will be clarified by the Committee Clerk at the October meeting.

Moved by Councillor Don Hamilton

Seconded by Prescott Harrison

That a letter be sent to Markham Taxi brokerages and to Markham Mobility informing them that they are permitted to drop off and pick up disabled patrons directly in front of Civic Centre without being ticketed.

CARRIED.

5. MARKHAM'S ACCESSIBLE TAXI SERVICES

Ms. Susan McGrath, Provincial Offences Officer Supervisor, provided an update on accessible taxi services in Markham. It was noted that new legislation obligates municipalities to do the following: consult the Advisory Committee on Accessibility on matters pertaining to accessible taxi cabs; enforce mandatory training for accessible taxi cab drivers on transferring a person with a disability to and from a cab; and have accessible taxi cabs in Markham. The new legislation also prohibits taxi drivers from charging a premium rate to persons with a disability.

The Town currently has one hundred and ninety seven (197) taxi cabs and fifty two (52) airport cabs. In order to meet legislative requirements, the next twenty one (21) transferable taxi plates issued by Markham will be for dual purpose accessible taxi cabs. It was noted that the accessible taxi cabs will be a rear or side loading dual purpose van.

It was reported that the Town has received a proposal from a new taxi brokerage for five (5) accessible taxi cabs. The Town may consider reducing the licensing fee for accessible taxi cabs to encourage brokerages to operate accessible taxi cabs. It could also require brokerages to have a minimum number of accessible taxi cabs.

6. MARKVILLE MALL RENOVATION

Councillor Don Hamilton was requested to meet with a representative from Cadillac Fairview to discuss the proposed glass panels at Markville Mall that will replace the railing on the upper level of the mall, as the Committee felt it would be challenging for the visually impaired to see glass panels. It was suggested that a panel be set up to encourage an open dialogue with respect to any accessibility issues pertaining to the renovation at Markville Mall.

7. YORK REGION RECREATIONAL SERVICES UPDATE

Warren Rupnarain reported that York Region has a variety of programs for children and adults with a disability.

8. YORK REGION ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBILITY

Mr. Rupnarain reported that members of the Markham Advisory Committee on Accessibility are welcome to apply to fill vacancies as they arise on the Regional Markham Advisory Committee on Accessibility.

9. 2012 NATIONAL ACCESS WEEK EVENT

The Committee agreed to start the planning of National Access Week event in the fall.

10. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Members were frustrated with the amount of time it was taking to appoint new members to the Advisory Committee on Accessibility.

Moved by Prescott Harrison

Seconded by Councillor Alan Ho

That all necessary steps be taken to expedite the appointment of members to the Advisory Committee on Accessibility prior to the September meeting.

CARRIED.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting date of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility Committee will be held on September 21, at 3:30 p.m. in the Canada Room.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The Advisory Committee on Accessibility adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Attachment: Outstanding Items List (updated on April 27, 2011)

1. Promotions and Business Initiatives Subcommittee

- a) Brochure: handouts (to be accessed)
- d) Board of Trade Awards: invite winner to AAC meeting to celebrate the achievement.

2. Promtions Subcommittee

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

3. Barriers Subcommittee

- a) Subcommittee developing a checklist of principles and features including the Markham Accessibility Guidelines, to provide consistency in the reviews – Committee reviewed guidelines in the spring of 2011.
- 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 (included for information purposes only).

Memo will be distributed to the Committee by the end of the third quarter.

- c) Warren Rupnarain will contact Biju Karumanchery to obtain a list of major projects the Town is currently working on and report back at the May 18, 2011 meeting.

4. 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. (Sidney to attend) - Upcoming Markham Seminar

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

5. Main Street Environmental Assessment

Warren and Markham BIA to coordinate efforts to ensure accessibility issues are not missed.

Dale MacKenzie will present digitally enhanced drawing at the next stage in design process – Fall 2011

Town engineering staff will encourage existing business owners to explore accessibility opportunities – Dale Mackenzie, throughout 2011

Committee plans to make presentation to the BIA in the fall of 2011.

6. 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. An email will be sent to the Committee.

7. Heritage/Accessibility

- Staff to provide info on coordination of accessibility (Warren) - ongoing
- Update on the BIA mandate to be provided following Council/BIA workshop

8. Building a Creative Advisory Committee

The Committee Clerk was requested to email the upcoming meeting dates of the Building a Creative Advisory Committee to the Committee. A member will attend based on availability – Summer 2011.

9. Accessibility of the Underground Parking Lot

Investigate barriers prevent disabled volunteers from parking in the under ground parking lot at Markham Civic Centre – Warren Rupnarain – September 2011

10. National Access Week Event

Start the Planning and Execution of a larger scale event for the 2012 National Access Week in the fall of 2011 – All Committee Members.

11. Accessibility Issues at Le Parc

Follow-up with Le Parc to see if suggestions have been implemented in September 2011- Warren Rupnarain

12. Site Plan Memorandum

Email memorandum to Committee prior to bringing it forward to the Development Services Committee – Warren Rupnarain

Memo is now being email to Mayor and Members of Council.

13. Full Service Gas Stations in Markham

Follow up with the Canadian Petroleum Institute regarding full service gas stations in Markham in October 2011 - Warren Rupnarain (Petro Canada, Esso, and Shell contacted)

14. Letter to Taxi Brokerages and Markham Mobility

Letter to be sent to Markham Taxi Brokerages and to Markham Mobility regarding dropping of a picking up disabled patrons - This action will be deferred until the matter is fully clarified at the next meeting in September.