



Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date, Time and Location

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. at the Town Hall – Conference Room #1

Members

Lori Brant, Chair
Dennis Hernandez-Galeano, Vice Chair (at 4:44 p.m.)
Ashley Greaves
Adam McLeod
Gary Kooistra
Joe Kissman
Marilyn Abbs (regrets)
Jennica Giesbrecht
Lindsay Davis
Councillor Ann-Marie Noyes

Staff Resources

Keegan Gennings, Chief Building Official
Sean Hutton, Manager of Parks and Facilities (regrets)
Bev Bradnam, Manager, Strategic Initiatives

Guest

Angelo Apfelbaum, Manager Business Licensing, Business Licensing, Office of the Deputy CAO, Niagara Region

1) Call to Order

The April 30, 2024 AAC Meeting was called to order at 4:13 p.m.

2) Roll Call

All members were present with the exception of Marilyn Abbs and the Manager of Parks and Facilities, Sean Hutton. Dennis Hernandez-Galeano joined the meeting at 4:44 p.m.

3) Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest.

4) Adoption of the Agenda

Recommendation No. 1

Moved by: Jennica Giesbrecht
Seconded by: Joe Kissman

THAT: The April 30, 2024 Agenda of the Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting be approved as printed.

(CARRIED)

5) Adoption of Minutes

Recommendation No. 2:

Moved by: Adam McLeod
Seconded by: Gary Kooistra

THAT: The March 26, 2024 Minutes of the Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting be approved as printed.

(CARRIED)

6) Site Plans

1) 14 Ridgeway Road

The Committee viewed site plan details for a 65 unit residential building at 14 Ridgeway Road. Keegan pointed out the 3 type A and 2 type B accessible parking spaces, the curb ramp and tactile warning surface indicators, which aren't often shown on site plans in detail. There will be an elevator to reach the four floors and wide hallways. Angelo questioned if there would be an accommodation for drop off at the entrance to the building for taxis or specialized transit. Keegan noted that it is a private development and there are fire access routes marked on the drawing. Angelo encouraged consultation with the Region and possibly requesting an official letter that could allow regulating accessible drop off and pick-up. Keegan confirmed that the site plans are circulated to the Region for comment, in most cases. Angelo suggested sending the details to the Niagara Transit Commission for comment and it was noted that the On Demand and Specialized Transit vehicles are smaller and Keegan confirmed that there is a turning radius for garbage collection at the end of the entryway. Angelo noted that most specialized transit vehicles are able to drop the ramp right onto the sidewalk for easy access.

7) Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023

Bev advised that Ridgefest is being held on July 5, 6, and 7 this year and she has requested a space for the Saturday and Sunday (July 6th and 7th) so that the AAC can survey residents about barriers/improvements. It was agreed that the Committee would host the booth from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day and members will be asked to help survey in two-three hour time frames. The last survey included the following questions:

- 1) What barriers to **municipal services** do you feel are still occurring?
- 2) What other barriers in the **community** would you like to see addressed? How do they affect you and your family?
- 3) What does an accessible community look like to you?

Bev advised that there is still some “swag” left that will be provided to those that answer the survey at Ridgefest and then the survey will also be distributed through the Town’s social media channels. AAC members will also be conducting audits of facilities and parks and those will be confirmed at the May meeting.

Lori asked that we have some type of display board that shows all the great things that the AAC has been doing. Bev advised that she does have a display board that can be used.

8) Outstanding Matters

- 1) Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee – consultation April 23, 2024

Lori, Lindsay and Bev provided comments about the consultation that they participated in virtually. Bev showed the applicable slide that was provided by LURA Consulting that described the Community Engagement for the Region’s 2024-2029 Accessibility Plan. Bev described the issues that other participants had with how the consultation has been done to date (i.e. only sending out 1,900 postcards when we have a population of close to 500,000; attending the Pelham consultation and no one was there, etc.). Bev also asked if the Region was compliant with all of the AODA requirements and a clear response was not received. Lori advised that she felt they were not interested in any of our concerns and it was unsure if they received the AAC’s comments as Fort Erie was not mentioned with the other municipalities that had participated.

The second presentation provided was an “Introduction to Niagara Transit Commission’s Transit Master Planning Project” by their consultant Left Turn Right Turn (LTRT). Lori asked about how On Demand and Specialized comments are being received and was told that they are not dealing with those concerns but a meeting following the Regional AAC meeting would deal with those. It was noted during the meeting that On Demand and Specialized Transit would be amalgamating, which was news to Lori, Lindsay and Bev.

8) Outstanding Matters, continued

1) Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee – consultation April 23, 2024, continued

Lori asked the question where Fort Erie sits if they only have On Demand and Specialized and was told that it was not part of this consultation and to put her concerns in writing. Lori noted that they were advised that someone (Liz Hay, Vice Chair of the Regional AAC) was representing all persons with disabilities on the NRT Public Advisory Committee. Lori questioned how we could invite Liz and the Fort Erie representative chosen by Council to sit on the NRT Public Advisory Committee, Jeff Mann, to an AAC meeting to discuss our concerns.

It was agreed that our concerns would be put in writing and shared with Liz Hay (Vice-Chair of the Regional AAC), Jeff Mann (Fort Erie representative designated by Council), the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (representing seven of the smaller municipalities) and the Mayor (as Vice-Chair to the Niagara Regional Transit Commission).

Angelo suggested also copying in the Regional Clerk and the Niagara Transit Commission as they are the ultimate decision makers. Angelo also encouraged the AAC to connect with CUTA (Canadian Urban Transit Association) and APTA (American Public Transit Association).

Bev briefly pulled up the agenda for the NRT Public Advisory Committee and the Report NTC-8-2024 on the consolidation of contracted specialty transit services. Which can be found at:

<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=37014>

2) Parking Concerns

Councillor Noyes advised that there are no accessible parking spaces in Stevensville along West Main or Stevensville Road even though there are commercial buildings in the area. Bev advised that this could be included in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan recommendations to Council, similar to the last MYAP. Councillor Noyes mentioned that the Town put a parking space right in front of the ramp to the Stevensville Post Office.

Gary questioned if the potholes were filled for Life Labs and the Medical Centre and Keegan confirmed that they were filled in for 238 Bertie Street.

Dennis advised that the Uncle Sam's Bingo Hall has six old-style accessible spaces and none with the hatch marks and he recently had to take up two spaces. Keegan will look to see if there are any site plan details. If there is ample parking available, a letter will be done encouraging them to accommodate larger vans with ramps and an aisle way.

8) Outstanding Matters, continued

3) Adult size Change Table at Bay Beach

Sean has advised that the electrical work has been completed and Tikki will be having contractors back in to set the limits. It will be functioning by opening day. Remove from outstanding.

4) Stop Gap Ramp Project

Web page and application is available on line but staff will be pushing it out to businesses and BIA after Bev's conference and vacation so that businesses aren't applying and then wondering for two weeks while she is away. Target date is the last week of May for National AccessAbility Week. The StopGap Foundation has been contacted and are excited to continue working with the Town. Councillor Noyes advised that St. John's will be applying for a ramp, noting that they have one already but require another one. Remain on outstanding.

5) Barrel Restaurant Access

Keegan advised that he spoke with the owner who advised that he had not received the original letter. Keegan resent the correspondence and talked to the owner about the transition and weight of the door. The owner advised that he wants to address the concerns and will work with Keegan on possible solutions. Lindsay provided some suggestions about opening up the interior doors and possibly putting in automatic doors. Members commented that the interior doors were possibly used to block the weather. Lori asked that consideration be given to moving the decorative barrel inside the interior door as she hits it every time she dines there. Bev noted that as a private business they are not required to make the improvements but it would be great if they did and she will keep an eye out for any grant opportunities. Keegan mentioned the Ontario Renovates grant and details were searched and it was noted that upper tier municipalities and larger cities offer this grant for residential improvements only and it is income based. Remain on outstanding.

6) Beatties/Staples – accessible door

No updates. Still to determine if door is used or closed off. Remain on outstanding.

7) Niagara AAC Workshop – May 16, 2024 (Bev will be at a conference)

Bev asked for confirmation of who will be participating and representing the Fort Erie AAC. Lori and Lindsay have registered and Councillor Noyes advised that she would register. Remain on outstanding for a report back from attendees.

8) Outstanding Matters, continued

8) Ramp at Royal Bank, Jarvis Street

Keegan advised that By-law Enforcement went out to look at the ramp and there is nothing to regulate. The ramp is still in fair shape and the ground level looks like the concrete around the piers is heaving/raising everything up a ½". As this still creates a tripping hazard and there is still not enough space to access the ramp in a wheel chair without hitting the base plates, a letter will be sent with pictures. The letter will also state that AAC members are willing to come out and demonstrate the difficulties the ramp creates. Remain on outstanding.

9) Crafted 1885

A letter was sent to the business. No response to date. Remain on outstanding.

10) A & W

Gennica noted that there is a curb cut and walkway but it is very hard to distinguish. Keegan provided commentary related to the pathway from the parking lot into the restaurant and provided pictures that were taken. It was suggested that tactile warning plates be installed to show a contrast of where to cross safely. Keegan will bring back comments to Engineering regarding the possibility of including tactile warning plates. Remain on outstanding.

9) New Business

1) National AccessAbility Week

Bev advised that due to the meeting schedule, Council was asked at the April 22, 2024 Regular meeting to proclaim May 26 - June 1, 2024 as "National AccessAbility Week". Bev advised that she would like Lori and herself to be a delegation at the May 27, 2024 Council meeting to recognize the week and provide Council and the public with an update on the MYAP consultation, StopGap project and other initiatives that the AAC has undertaken. Bev advised that an overview is provided in the Annual Status Report to Council but she would include pictures and details from the past year in the presentation.

2) CUI - Beyond Obligation: How Can Cities Embrace Accessible Infrastructure

Bev advised that she participated in a webinar hosted by the Canadian Urban Institute that had a panel consisting of developers, designers, and the Rick Hansen Foundation. Key highlights included changing the conversation of accessible/affordable housing from cost vs. human capital potential.

9) **New Business, continued**

2) **CUI - Beyond Obligation: How Can Cities Embrace Accessible Infrastructure, continued**

The Daniels Corporation, who have constructed affordable/accessible housing for 40 years, spoke about their Accessibility Design Program that has been offered since 2017. The Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) noted that 57% of Canadians with disabilities are currently unemployed but would be able to work if the workplace was accessible. The current GDP could grow to \$316 Billion by 2030 if people could access places. CMHC provides better financing rates for houses being built/developments that meet the Rick Hansen Foundation Gold Standard.

When thinking about signage, icons are also good for newcomers that might not be able to yet read English. Missing from the conversation is the benefit to build accessible (i.e. grocery store accessible means more people will come in).

“Living, not just existing” was a key them in the discussions. There was also a link provided to the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification Cost Comparison Feasibility Study that shows the average new construction cost increase across the three building-related RHFAC site types to achieve gold with a score of at least 80% is estimated to be an additional 1% of the construction. To incorporate 100% of RHFAC features is estimated to be an additional 6.1% - “Accessibility can be achieved with minimal cost impact through commitment to thoughtful/universal design”

3) **Canadian Congress on Disability Inclusion 2024 – May 23, 2024 – theme “Forward Together: Accessibility and Inclusion For All” – 10:30 a.m. to 5:20 p.m.**

Bev provided details in an email regarding the CCDI event. Those wanting to participate must register.

4) **Sensory Garden for Kids**

Lindsay had sent in the picture on the right depicting a three acre garden “agri-hood” in Detroit that feeds 2,000 households for free.



9) New Business, continued

5) Accessible Taxis/Shuttle Services, continued

Angelo provided an update on accessible/taxi options for Fort Erie residents. Angelo advised that he has met with Regional Limousine and they are looking at several promising options including the possibility of taking over taxi licences that have recently become available. Angelo advised that he will be meeting on Friday with all larger taxi service providers and he will speak to them about empty billing.

Angelo noted that there were 20 taxi brokers in Niagara when the Region took over licencing and now there are 12 that are fully in compliance and have many ways to book from on-line, mobile app, phone, email and text. If Regional Limousine does provide shuttle service they will offer various means of booking to ensure everyone has the ability to book a ride and they also want to keep the cost to a minimum and will post their flat rates. Angelo also noted that he has had a long conversation with BTS and they are looking at expanding privately and offering a shuttle service. Angelo is currently working with them on vehicles and driver licences. Angelo noted that a lot of the cab drivers live here in Fort Erie. Angelo asked that if anyone does have an issue with taxis/shuttles or know of any illegal rides being offered to let him know. He noted that any of the un-licenced rides do not have the proper insurance. Angelo noted that Loyal Transportation is licenced and vetted and is similar to an Uber or Lyft, which are also looking to provide service locally. Angelo advised that he is still working on obtaining refunds for Joe.

10) Date for Next Meeting

The next AAC meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, May 28, 2024, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.

11) Adjournment

Recommendation No. 3:

Moved by: Joe Kissman
Seconded by: Adam McLeod

THAT: The April 30, 2024 meeting of the Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee does now hereby adjourn at 5:36 p.m.

(CARRIED)

Minutes recorded and prepared by:

Minutes approved by:

Bev Bradnam, DPA, CMM III
Manager of Strategic Initiatives

Lori Brant
Chair