

MINUTES
ACCESSIBILITY, DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Committee Rm. 2 and via Microsoft Teams
Saanich Municipal Hall, 770 Vernon Road
September 6, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Councillor Mena Westhaver, Maya Bosdet (via Teams), Rae Franklin (via Teams), Stephan Herman, Laurie-Anne Keith, Donald Kennedy, Rachid Ouache (via Teams), Shapna Mazumber and Reed Poynter.

Staff: Sheila Allen, Director, Corporate Services; Troy McKay, Senior Manager of Transportation & Development Services (via Teams); Dale Samsonoff, Manager of People and Programs; Allison Newcomb, Human Resource Associate Advisor; Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk.

Regrets: Kam Judge

CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair welcomed the committee members, and the following was noted:

- The Terms Of Reference were amended and adopted by Council on August 10, 2023.
- The next meeting date may change to November 8, 2023.
- A new committee member will be appointed in the fall to replace the member that has left.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by L. Keith and Seconded by S. Herman: "That the Minutes of the Accessibility, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Advisory Committee meeting dated May 31, 2023 be adopted."

The committee made the following comments during discussion about the minutes:

- An endorsement from the Accessibility, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) Committee for the draft plan or staff's approach to developing the plan, was not expressed clearly via a motion.
- Committee consensus was that of support for the draft plan.

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED

OVERVIEW OF THE DRAFT ACCESSIBILITY PLAN PRESENTATION

Melissa Lyon, Accessibility & Inclusion Matter Consulting, gave a presentation (PowerPoint on file) and the following was noted:

- Copies of the draft plan are available to the public, and questions and comments are welcome.
- The goal for this session is to:
 - Provide information about the Draft Accessibility Plan
 - To introduce the Accessibility Feedback Mechanism
 - To answer questions and receive feedback from the ADEI members.
- This process began when the *Accessible British Columbia Act* (2021) was introduced, and Saanich has met the following deadlines:
 - To have a draft plan posted publicly by September 1, 2023
 - To assemble an accessibility committee
 - To create a feedback mechanism
- Employee input has been collected. A request for public input will begin in the fall.
- This multi-year plan will be in place until 2026. Reviews and feedback will be ongoing.
- Statistics Canada has found that Canadian residents living with disabilities face many barriers.
- The employment rate for persons with disabilities has recently risen from 59% to 65% for women and to 69% for men.
- In Saanich it is estimated that 22% of students over the age of 15 are living with one or more disabilities.
- The purpose of this plan is to increase awareness, improve accessibility within Saanich and provide ways to give feedback.
- Three themes that have emerged from the consultation are:
 - Recommendations for change should be made by people that are directly affected.
 - Creation of accessible spaces should be proactive and thoughtful, not reactionary.
 - Access to facilities, programs and services should be accessible for all.
- Saanich has many accessibility achievements including:
 - A new website design with colour, print size and language options
 - Inclusion training for recreation staff
 - Improvements to washrooms, elevators, and pathways.
- Saanich employees feel that they are cared about and as a District and adapt to support them.
- Of the many barriers that the Saanich staff has identified, attitudinal barriers is a prominent theme throughout.
- The priorities identified are, awareness and training, built environment improvements, increased access to policies, procedures, and feedback. There are many actions to support achieving these priorities.
- Saanich has created a feedback mechanism to give the public the opportunity to offer input by phone, email or in person.
- Some of the next steps are to:
 - Apply for grants
 - Continue to consult with employees and the public through the feedback mechanism
 - Update the Saanich website to include an Accessibility Hub

The committee made the following comments, and the following was noted:

- Using the word “community” rather than “culture” is a more accurate description of Saanich.
- Including the words “everyone who is a resident of Saanich can continue to grow and thrive” is a more personal approach.
- Developing individual emergency plans for community members could be included in the training for emergency preparedness. Funding for this can be supplied through the budget process and grants.
- Training is needed for emergency responders to assist individuals with equipment like oxygen tanks.
- Sidewalk accessibility in Saanich is part of the built environment improvements priority.
- Multiple languages and braille would be helpful on all signage in Saanich. The sight loss community can assist in the appropriate placement of braille.
- Audio presentations or QR codes on signage would be a helpful option.
- A welcome kiosk in the Municipal Hall parking lot would promote accessibility.
- A presentation from staff to explain the plans for increasing accessibility within the Municipal Hall would be an appropriate future agenda item.
- People with disabilities and accessibility challenges could be involved in the process of choosing new software programs and overseeing environmental improvements.
- A catalogue of assistive devices and accommodations for employees is a suggestion given by staff input. Clarity would be appreciated on if the items already exist or are budgeted to acquire.
- The voluntary design guidelines for adaptable housing should be a legislated requirement.
- Standardized guidelines for our emergency response teams needs clarification.
- In general, the hiring process for equality can be a challenge.
- The word “should” could be changed to “can” under the “Nothing about us without us” theme.

FLOATING BUS STOPS

Reed Poynter, committee member, gave a presentation and following was noted:

- 18% to 20% of people in BC have some form of a disability.
- Cycling is a choice, having a disability is not.
- Transit is the only means of transportation for a large demographic of people.
- Designers need to recognize the priorities of these people and design accordingly.
- Bike lanes are a safety concern for people in the sight loss community.
- Internationally, the floating bus stop design has been introduced adjacent to bike lanes in order to assist cyclists.
- Floating bus stops are situated between the curb lane and the roadway. Many of these configurations are dangerously situated especially for the sight loss community.
- The sight loss community is not the only group of people that are affected by the future design of the floating bus stops.
- Where there is no stoplight, the reliance is on the cyclist to stop.
- Crossing the bike lane to board the bus is a concern for people with vision challenges due to potentially dangerous encounters with cyclists.

- There are five elements of design for the floating bus stops that should be considered with accessibility in mind:
 - Sidewalk
 - The edge of the sidewalk before the bike lane
 - Bike lane
 - The edge of the bus island
 - Bus island
- A universal design would assist in making these lanes safe and accessible for all. Tactile markings on the edge of the sidewalks and the bus island are options.
- Multiple experiments within Victoria have shown that the current signage to slow down and yield is being ignored by cyclists.
- The Rick Hansen Foundation recorded 21 cyclists ignoring the signage before one stopped to allow a person to cross.
- BC transit and TransLink are looking to create guidelines for the province.
- Recommendations to Saanich about the potential problems with the floating bus lanes would be appreciated.
- The use of electronic bikes is on the rise.

The committee made the following comments, and the following was noted:

- A physical barrier design is not available between sidewalks and bike lanes.
- There are challenges within the *B.C. Motor Vehicle Act* concerning controlled traffic signals and how they are used.
- A polarized yellow light could be an option for the crosswalks.

The Senior Manager of Transportation & Development Services made the following comments, and the following was noted:

- The presentation was an effective way to highlight the challenges with the floating bus stop design.
- Feedback is being collected across the province through TransLink, the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and B.C. Transit to assist in the new design.
- Saanich has volunteered to be a test community for the new guidelines that are being developed.
- In October the public and the committee are invited to visit the testing sight for evaluation.
- The test sites have been installed with duct work that is retrofitted to anticipate future regulations.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 4, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.

Councillor Westhaver, Chair

I hereby certify these minutes are accurate.

Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk