



Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 8, 2020
3:00 pm
Online Attendance Only

Committee Members: Christine Easterbrook, Chair
Brad Frenette
Rachel Jewell
Fern Walsh

Absent: Debbie Alexander
Diana Kirkbride
Gord Queen

Administration: Danielle Dunlop
Katherine Hebert

1. Call to Order

Christine Easterbrook called the meeting to order at 2:56 PM.

2. Recording of Attendance

Debbie Alexander, Diana Kirkbride and Gord Queen sent their regrets for meeting. All others were in attendance virtually.

2.1 Welcome to New Member

On September 16, 2020 County Council approved the nomination of Rachel Jewell to fill the vacant position on the ECAAC.

The Chair introduced Danielle Dunlop, from County Administration and Rachel Jewell the new member of the Committee. Members took turns introducing themselves and welcomed Rachel Jewell to her position on the ECAAC.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

There were no conflicts of pecuniary interest declared.

4. Adoption of Regular Meeting Minutes

4.1 March 12, 2020 ECAAC Meeting Minutes

2020-10

Moved By Fern Walsh

Seconded By Brad Frenette

That the minutes of the March 12, 2020 meeting of the Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee be adopted as presented.

Carried

5. Delegations and Presentations

5.1 County of Essex - Infrastructure Services Department

Verbal report - Update on Civic Centre renovations: Accessible bathroom facilities in the lower level of the building. Scott Holland, Manager, Technical and Building Services and Randy Pearson, Supervisor- Facility Operations

Scott Holland, Manager of Technical and Building services for the County of Essex, provided an update on the Civic Centre basement renovations. Mr. Holland noted that the washrooms were completed in the basement, which included a universal washroom.

Mr. Holland indicated that the suggested portable lift was not usable in the current facility due to size. He advised that a permanent lift was explored and a structural engineer was needed to attend the Civic Centre to provide an assessment and drawings. Mr. Holland sought information from the Committee on the type of structure required and its specifications (size, type, location, etc.), advising that he intended to submit a request for quote. Budget for the lift was identified as a concern.

Members of the Committee expressed that a portable lift ([Hoyer](#)) should be able to fit in the space. Some lifts even fold up for times when they are not in use.

Fern Walsh suggested reaching out to the local municipalities to inquire about their lifts. Mr. Holland committed to take pictures and videos of the current washroom space to be shared with the Committee.

Kate Hebert committed to compiling options to be reviewed by the Committee. It was noted that there was approximately \$6,500 remaining in the ECAAC budget for 2020.

6. Communications

Discussion took place on the affects of COVID-19 and persons with disabilities.

Christine Easterbrook and Brad Frenette discussed the impact of COVID-19 on persons who are blind and have a reliance on touch, and encouraged everyone to read the articles.

2020-11

Moved By Brad Frenette

Seconded By Fern Walsh

That the correspondence listed on the regular agenda for October 8, 2020, be received.

Carried

6.1 AODA Toolbox

September 2020 - What you need to know about Ontario's Accessibility Laws.

6.2 AODA Alliance

[What's New?](#)

6.3 Town of Amherstburg

Resolution RE AODA Accessibility Compliance Extension Request

The Committee discussed the correspondence from the Town of Amherstburg, which included a resolution requesting an extension on meeting the Web Accessibility WCAG standards from the AODA by the January 2021 deadline.

Christine Easterbrook, also a member of the Amherstburg Accessibility Committee, indicated that the resolution was not presented or discussed by the Amherstburg AAC.

Some discussion took place regarding the status of the web accessibility at other municipalities across Ontario. There was concern that other municipalities may request extensions as well. Ms. Easterbrook and the Committee as a whole expressed their disappointment in the delay.

Katherine Hebert advised that the Town of Amherstburg was requesting that County Council and the lower tiers endorse their request for extension. Ms. Hebert noted that the request for

endorsement was also sent to all municipalities in the province, as well as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

The Committee agreed to draft a letter to County Council to express their concern and disappointment with the request, and to provide their support for the municipalities to comply with the Standards by the deadline of January 2021.

It was noted that the County of Essex is already compliant with the requirements under the legislation and the deadline of January 2021.

2020-12

Moved By Brad Frenette

Seconded By Fern Walsh

That the Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee send a letter to Essex County Council outlining their opposition to the resolution received from the Town of Amherstburg, dated September 21, 2020; and

That Essex County Council support the ECAAC's position and send a letter to the Town of Amherstburg, opposing their proposed extension as a matter of principle; and

That a copy of this letter be forwarded to the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility and local lower tier municipalities for their information and for Council support.

Carried

6.4 The Toronto Star

September 14, 2020 - [Strengthening Canada's disability community in a post-pandemic world - David Onley](#)

6.5 CBC News

September 18, 2020 - [Federal COVID-19 supports for Canadians with disabilities are too little, too late, advocates say - Kathleen Harris](#)

6.6 The Globe and Mail

September 11, 2020 - [As employment in Canada continues to struggle, it's disabled folks who feel it the worst - K.J. Aiello](#)

6.7 CBC News - British Columbia

September 17, 2020 - [B.C. senior who was called a 'loser' for demanding accessibility in condo building wins \\$35K - Bethany Lindsay](#)

6.8 Medium.com

June 2, 2020 - [COVID-19 and blindness: Why the new touchless, physically-distant world sucks for people with visual impairment - Nicolas Giudice](#)

6.9 CBC News - Kitchener-Waterloo

September 17, 2020 - [Ontario woman says she wasn't welcome in main area of hotel with guide dog - Julianne Hazelwood](#)

6.10 David Lepofsky - Open Letter to Ford Government

September 21, 2020 - [What is the Ford Government Doing to Effectively Enforce the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act?](#)

6.11 Provincial Announcement

News Release: [Ontario Extends Critical Delivery Program for Seniors and People with Disabilities](#)

6.12 Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO)

September 24, 2020 - [September is Guide Dogs Awareness Month – Help Us Spread the Word!](#)

6.13 Global Accessibility News

September 28, 2020 - [Issue 9 Online and Latest News](#)

6.14 Abilities Expo

[Virtual Abilities Expo](#)

7. Reference Items

7.1 Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees

How to serve on a municipal accessibility advisory committee: [A guide to help members of municipal accessibility advisory committees carry out their responsibilities, engage with their municipal government and work well as a team.](#)

Rachel Jewell committed to reviewing the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee reference item.

8. Unfinished Business

8.1 Letter to Prime Minister

On July 15, 2020 Essex County Council received a [letter from the ECAAC](#) addressing the issue of the impacts of COVID-19 on people with disabilities. As a result, the letter was circulated to the federal government, local MPs, AMO and to the local lower tier municipalities.

Christine Easterbrook reported on the correspondence that was sent to the Prime Minister in March, 2020 addressing the issue of the impacts of COVID-19 on people with disabilities and the support required. She noted that confirmation of receipt of the letter was received by email.

It was anticipated that \$600 will be sent to people with disabilities by the end of October, however, the Committee feels that this is an insufficient amount and was hopeful for additional payments.

8.2 ECAAC Facebook Page

Update on posts and the ECAAC online presence.

The Chair encouraged committee members to view the current posts on the ECAAC Facebook page and to continue to share insights as they find resources of their own that may be of interest for the followers.

Rachel Jewell committed to providing a short bio for her introduction to the Committee on the public Facebook page.

Fern Walsh encouraged the group to post video or pictures with short descriptions for increased community engagement.

Katherine Hebert advised that future meetings of the ECAAC would be live-streamed and it is the intention to share this live link on the County Website. This link can be further shared for more traction on the ECAAC Facebook page. This live-stream will facilitate compliance with the need for public participation at meetings. To-date, no one has requested to participate in the ECAAC meeting from the public, but that can also happen if need be.

Christine Easterbrook requested that the Committee compile a list of important issues to be discussed or shared on Facebook. This item will be added to the next agenda.

8.3 Joint Meeting - Accessibility Advisory Committees

Further discussion regarding coordinating a joint meeting with the local AAC Chairs and Administrative staff.

The Chair discussed the coordination of a joint meeting with the local AAC Chairs and Administrative staff. Peter Best, Co-Chair for Windsor Accessibility Committee (WAAC) had also expressed interest in arranging a similar meeting.

Fern Walsh indicated that the Accessibility Committee for the Town of Essex was also interested in a joint meeting.

Katherine Hebert indicated that she had previously sent a request to all 7 lower tier municipalities, Windsor and Chatham-Kent. Feedback was received from the Town of Essex and Town of Kingsville.

Discussion took place with regard to agenda items for a joint meeting. What would the Joint Local Chairs discuss? It was noted that recent flooding, and the pandemic have made more obvious the need for emergency planning for the vulnerable sector, especially those with disabilities.

Ms. Hebert advised that she would consult the County Emergency Coordinator, for some advice on next steps for the committee if they want to have a focus on emergency planning at the joint meeting.

Ms. Hebert committed to reaching out to the local lower tier, Windsor and Chatham-Kent AAC Coordinators with the intent to schedule a meeting on December 10, 2020.

8.4 Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) Greenway Trails

Discussion regarding a plan for volunteer inspections and the provision of feedback on findings for ERCA.

The Chair recommended seeking volunteers and assistance from the lower tier municipalities to prepare a booklet for people with disabilities, identifying accessible trails and rest spots. She noted that this item could be raised at the joint meeting of the AAC Chairs for discussion.

9. Reports and Questions

There were no reports and questions for the October 8, 2020 meeting.

10. New Business

10.1 Emergency Management Ontario

[Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities / Special Needs](#)

The Chair noted that it would be a good idea for all members to prepare a 'go bag' in case of emergency evacuation.

10.2 2021 Budget

Discussion regarding the planning of 2021 financial needs of the ECAAC.

Katherine Hebert provided a financial update to the Committee, advising that the amount requested for the ECAAC in the 2021 Budget will be the same as the amount approved for 2020. It was agreed that the budget funds would be used for ECAAC initiatives for 2021. It was further agreed that the remaining funds for 2020 be used to purchase the Lift for the Civic Centre restroom.

Ms. Hebert indicated that COVID had a financial impact on all municipalities, but remained hopeful that the proposal for the ECAAC budget would be approved.

2020-13

Moved By Rachel Jewell

Seconded By Fern Walsh

THAT the ECAAC submit the budget request of \$7000 for the 2021 budget.

Carried

10.3 ECAAC Meetings - Dialogue

Discussion regarding future ECAAC meetings, planning for alternatives should the pandemic or something else continue prevent in-person meetings.

Discussion took place regarding future meetings continuing on a virtual platform. A live stream will be shared on social media and the County website. Members of the public will also have the

ability to contact County Administration to receive a link to the meeting.

It was agreed that the Committee will continue with a virtual meeting platform for an undetermined amount of time. Meetings will continue monthly.

10.4 Roundtable Discussion

COVID-19 Impacts on those living with disabilities, the accessibility community as a whole and how the ECAAC can raise awareness.

The Committee discussed accessibility opportunities for the community. The following ideas were presented:

1. Brad Frenette requested audio description at the cinema in Leamington, a private service provider. It was noted that as the Accessibility Advisory Committee for the County, it was outside of the scope of authority for this committee to address the issue with a private sector business in Leamington. Mr. Frenette was advised that he could advocate for change, by writing to the owner of the business and also outlining how they could accommodate his needs (and potentially the needs of others in the community). Ms. Hebert reminded members that the scope of the Committee is to advise Municipal Council on matters relating to accessibility and the legislation, but noted that should members want to pursue some advocacy endeavors they were at liberty to do so on their own, or with an advocacy group to raise awareness in the private sector.
2. An Accessibility webinar was recommended for 2021.
3. It was agreed that the delegation of ECAAC at County Council would be deferred to first quarter of 2021.
4. The Committee was encouraged to increase their social media awareness

11. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the ECAAC is scheduled for November 5, 2020 at 3:00 PM.

12. Adjournment

The October 8, 2020 meeting of the Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee was adjourned at 5:04 PM.

2020-10-08 Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee - Meeting
Minutes

2020-14

Moved By Brad Frenette

Seconded By Fern Walsh

That the October 8, 2020 meeting of the Essex County Accessibility
Advisory Committee be adjourned at 5:04 PM.

Carried