

Request for Decision



To: Regular Meeting
From: **Corporate Services**
Date: May 8, 2023
Subject: Accessibility Advisory Committee
Recommendation: **THAT Council establish the Accessibility Advisory Committee as outlined in the attached Terms of Reference; AND THAT Council appoint _____ to the Committee as a voting member and Council's Liaison.**

Purpose

This report was presented at the Committee of the Whole (COTW) meeting on April 17, 2023 to review and discuss the Terms of Reference (TOR) for an Accessibility Advisory Committee for the City of Grand Forks.

The COTW found all to be in order and no changes were made. The item is now presented to Council for final consideration and approval.

Background

On June 17, 2021, the Province established the *Accessible British Columbia Act* (the "Act") with the regulations coming into effect as of September 1, 2022. Based on these regulations, the City must comply by September 1, 2023.

So, what does this mean for the City?

Part 3 of the *Act* outlines the responsibilities for organizations including the City regarding accessibility. (see attached)

On a high level, 3 items are required by the City by the September 1, 2023 deadline:

1. An accessibility committee
2. An accessibility plan
3. A tool to receive feedback on accessibility

Terms of Reference highlights

The attached TOR is broken down into several categories and includes all the items set out under Part 3 of the Act.

Purpose: The Purpose section identifies the reason for the committee and includes the mandate from the provincial legislation:

- a. assist the City to identify barriers to individuals in or interacting with the City, and
- b. advise the City on how to remove and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the City.

Membership: The Membership section outlines the composition of the Committee. Provincial requirements in this case prescribe the following (see attached FAQ for organizations):

Accessibility committees, to the extent possible, should have at least half of its members:

- a. Be persons with disabilities.*
- b. Represent a disability-serving organization.*

Membership should also reflect the diversity of British Columbians and have Indigenous representation. Committees may include members from inside or outside of the organization.

The current recommendation is to establish the Committee with a total of 5 voting members that are appointed by Council. It is recommended that one of those 5 members is a member of Council who would also act as a Liaison to Council. A City Staff representative would also be appointed by the CAO to the Committee.

To complete the Committee, Staff would begin a public search (through advertisements) for 3 additional members from the community that preferably have previous Board or Committee experience, and that understand the role of the City when addressing accessibility. It is also critical that the Provincial requirements listed above are considered in the selection of Committee members.

At this time, it is recommended that the Committee have two co-chairs. One co-chair would represent the City (either the member of Council or City Staff person), and the other co-chair would represent the community members.

Time Commitment: It is anticipated that the Committee meets two to three times a year, once in March, once in September, and if necessary, in preparation for Council budget presentations in December or January as part of the annual budget process. The initial term would be for 18 months to provide a solid start for the committee from September 2023 to March 2025, and annual terms thereafter with appointments by Council to occur each spring.

Committee Procedures: This section outlines the general procedures of the Committee, for example, the definition of quorum (50% plus one), or setting date and time of the next meeting. Decisions would be taken by consensus.

Focus Area: The Committee's intended focus is on areas that are within the jurisdiction of the City and where the City's role is to deliver a service to the community. As such, the following three key categories can be used to highlight the City's area of responsibilities when establishing goals to identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers:

- a. Public Infrastructure
- b. City programs and services
- c. Municipal Information, regulations, and policies

Public Feedback: This section is intentionally not complete and will be developed as part of the Short Term Action Plan at the Committee's first meeting.

Annual Tasks: This section contains a checklist of annual items that should be completed by the Committee. In general, the intent is to review the TOR and the Focus Area and the Action Plan (Schedule A) annually to ensure that they continue to align with Provincial mandates or guidelines.

Schedule A - Action Plans: Schedule A is intended to be an ever-evolving document. The committee would focus each year on possible next projects and present those projects to Council for consideration as part of the budget process, and, if approved by Council, the TOR and Schedule A would be updated based on Council's desires.

Short Term Action Plan: For 2024 it is recommended that the Committee focuses on a single project that can be presented as part of the 2024 budget process. The Committee should also develop a strategy for the public to provide feedback to the Committee (which is a requirement of Part 3 of the Act). This would then update the "Public Feedback" section of the TOR once developed and approved by Council.

Long Term Action Plan: The Long Term Action Plan section is intended for developing potential goals and projects for future years for Council consideration. Again, the intent is for these items to be amended and updated over the years.

Summary

At this time, Council should give final consideration to the TOR and discuss appointment of a member of Council as Council's representative on the Committee.

Benefits or Impacts

General

Following Provincial legislation to establish a Committee to develop recommended accessibility projects for Council consideration.

Finances

At this time there are no financial impacts. Projects that are developed would be presented to Council as part of the annual budget process.

Strategic Impact

N/A

Risk Assessment

Compliance: Accessible British Columbia Act – in particular Part 3

Risk Impact: Low to Medium – this is a new Committee at this point and there could be unforeseen challenges for the first few years as further guidelines are developed.

Internal Control Process: Staff are following the legislative requirements.

Next Steps / Communication

1. If approved, Staff will issue advertisements in the Gazette and on Facebook throughout the later part of May and early June.

2. Staff to present potential candidates for Committee Membership to Council over the summer months.
3. Inaugural meeting to be scheduled between September 5 and September 15, depending on availability of the Committee members appointed by Council this summer.

Attachments

- Terms of Reference for Accessibility Advisory Committee
 - Part 3 of the Accessible BC Act
 - FAQ regarding Accessible BC Act for organizations
 - Accessibility legislation plain language summary
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Recommendation

THAT Council establish the Accessibility Advisory Committee as outlined in the attached Terms of Reference; AND THAT Council appoint _____ to the Committee as a voting member and Council's Liaison.

Options

1. Council could recommend amendments to the TOR.