Agenda – Executive Policy Committee – April 15, 2009

REPORTS

Item No. 1 Access Advisory Committee – 2008 Annual Report
File CR-3

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On March 10, 2009, the Access Advisory Committee submitted to the Executive Policy Committee its 2008 Annual Report.

Access Advisory Committee

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

Chair's Message

Councillor Jenny Gerbasi



The Mayor, Council and civic administration continue to show support for accessibility, universal design and the Access Advisory Committee (AAC). I'd like to thank each person for their assistance with the work we're doing.

In 2008 the AAC successfully advocated for an additional $100,000 per year for the Accessibility Program. Your civic leaders have recognized that retrofitting city buildings for accessibility is a priority, so that all people can enjoy our facilities.

Regrouping, reflection and transition were themes for 2008. Along with a new Coordinator – meet Chris Sobkowicz in this report – we looked at how we can continue to bring about improvements and affect change to make our city more accessible.

We surveyed the community of persons with disabilities to get a clearer understanding of their concerns with respect to city services. We received a good response. This information was incorporated into the strategic planning session we held where we established the AAC's priorities for 2009-2010.

The survey revealed only 40% of people are aware of the City's Universal Design Policy. In this report you'll meet Judy Redmond, the Universal Design Coordinator, who works to increase awarness of our Universal Design Policy and to ensure that it is a living policy that positively impacts civic information, services and properties.

The AAC members provided advice and input on a variety of city projects and policy documents. Some major projects include the Old Market Square Park, Chief Peguis Trail Extension and Red River Community Centre.

The committee also provided input about accessible signage throughout the city, which is beneficial to people of all ages and abilities.

There's plenty more work to do and the AAC is poised, ready and eager to work with the community, council and administration. An accessible City of Winnipeg truly makes life better for each and every one of us!

Our Universal Design Champion: Judy Redmond

Winnipeg was Canada's first city to adopt a Universal Design Policy (December 2001). The AAC helped develop and recommend the policy, which incorporates accessibility for a wide range of users with respect to civic information, services and property.



Judy Redmond, Universal Design Coordinator (UDC), started in 2003. While the AAC bridges the public with politicians and policy development, the UDC works with civic administration on accessibility concerns. The AAC works closely with Judy and provides input on a range of projects. Judy works with a steering committee including a representative from the AAC, that helps suggest solutions for accessibility issues and make decisions regarding the implementation of policy.

A key element of Judy's work is educating civic administration about Universal Design and the City of Winnipeg Accessibility Design Standards (introduced in 2006). Judy works with the AAC, administration and the general public to develop and deliver training about the accessibility design standards and accessibile web design. Judy has also developed and distributed a self-evaluation tool for administration to assess their department's accessibility.

Judy is working to coordinate quarterly meetings for the City's citizen committees. It will maximize the role committees play in communicating community concerns at the city level when these six groups work together on accessibility concerns.

Before accepting the UDC position, Judy was the AAC's Committee Coordinator. She brings extensive knowledge about universal design and accessibility to the position. Judy is working toward a Master's degree in Accessibility and Inclusive Design. This designation will, again, place Winnipeg in the forefront of expert knowledge in Universal Design. Her thesis topic focuses on municipal accessibility standards development through a community consultation model.

Presently the greatest challenge is prioritizing projects and initiatives given the reality of budgets and available human resources. Judy says, "I am looking forward to the day when universal design has become part of what we do and think about everyday in every department."



AAC Provides Accessibility Expertise



What do streetscaping projects for Manitoba Hydro, Old Market Square and the Millennium Library Rooftop park have in common with the city's active transportation strategy and Chief Peguis Trail Extension? They're a sampling of projects the AAC has contributed their expertise to. The AAC also reviewed the accessibility design standards and provided recommendations about community centres and arenas.

Emergency Response for Persons with Disabilities



The AAC is pleased to be a part of the Disability Emergency Management Network (DEM-net). DEM-net offers input about emergency strategies that benefit those with intellectual, physical, emotional and sensory disabilities.

ACC Community Survey

The AAC launched an online survey to discover how the City of Winnipeg is doing with accessibility for its information, services and properties.



While forty-three percent of respondents ranked the City's accessibility as "good", 94% feel the city could be doing more. According to 65%, winter sidewalks are of one the biggest barriers to accessibility.

Comments repeatedly indicated the need for persons with disabilities to test the accessibility of city services, information and properties. Suggestions were made about training staff to be more positively responsive to persons with disabilities. Spending the money to ensure everyone has the same access was stressed. Putting yourself in the shoes of a person with a disability was mentioned more than once to greater understand challenges to access. Survey results were a key part of developing the AAC strategic plan for 2009-2010.

Farewell to Committee Members

The AAC bids a fond farewell to committee members Derek Legge, Sheila Montney and David Tweed. Thank you for your commitment to accessibility!

If you are passionate about accessibility and want to get involved, contact us and ask about becoming a committee member.

AAC Member Profile: Doris Koop

A lifelong athlete, AAC member Doris Koop isn't daunted by the idea of a 750 metre swim, a 20Km bike ride followed by a 5Km run.

She's preparing for a sprint triathlon on July 11, 2009 in the Muskoka area, about two hours from Toronto. Toronto coach Steve Bentley has helped create Doris' training schedule. Weekly contact with Steve keeps Doris on track.



Doris has low vision so she will be riding a tandem bike. A sited guide will steer while Doris sets the pace. Doris will also be tethered to a guide as she runs. "The swim is the hard part. We haven't found out how we're going to do that," she says, noting she'll train with her guide in April.



Along with regular swims at the Elmwood/East Kildonan YMCA and weight training at their gym, Doris also works on a wind trainer – a stationery bike with resistance on the back wheel – in her home. Doris' family has been supportive and she's even inspired them to get in shape.

Working out has provided Doris with an outlet for coping with everyday stresses. It also helps keep her goal – finishing the race in a respectful time – in focus.

"I'm getting older and my body is changing," she says. "I can be in very good physical condition and be happy and not be competing against the clock. It's just for me."

The staff at the Y orientated her to the weight room and the equipment – which she now navigates by memory. They also rope off a lane so she can swim during quieter times. "Because I have vision impairment, I have to think of timing so it's not too busy so I don't get in anybody's way or they don't get in mine," she says. "Persons with disabilities have to reschedule our lives."

Winter sidewalks aren't safe for training so Doris would like to see treadmills with audible or tactile keypads, contrasted coloured bars and larger fonts on control panels. "The technology is there," she says. "Maybe if we talked to gyms and fitness facilities it could be taken into consideration."

Meet Chris Sobkowicz
AAC Co-ordinator



In the spring the AAC was faced with the task of hiring a new Committee Coordinator. After a thorough hiring process, the AAC was pleased to hire Chris Sobkowicz.

Chris brings a wealth of experience. For 23 years, he was the Town of Morden's Director of Community Services. Most recently, he managed the Dakota Community Centre. Along with being a member of the Canada Sports Centre (Manitoba) and former board member for the Manitoba Wheelchair Sport Association, Chris was also a member of the Team Manitoba Wheelchair Curling Team. He



is currently a member of the Team Canada Wheelchair Curling Team that competed at the World Wheelchair Curling Championships in 2009. Chris is married with two children. Chris assumed his position on September 15, 2008 and is eager to contribute his perspective to the AAC's work.

Congratulations Chris
World Wheelchair Curling
Gold Medalist ~ 2009!

Financial Report 2008

Revenues

Council Funding	$ 69,000

Expenditures

Meeting Costs	$ 4,409
Administrative Support	$ 29,020
Administrative Supplies	$ 3,634
Special Projects	$ 3,041
Communication	$ 4,293
Total	$ 44,397
Balance	$ 24,603

Note: Balance reflects only six months with a Committee Coordinator and deferring the Accessibility Awards to 2009.

Goals for 2009

On Tuesday, November 4, 2008, the AAC participated in a strategic planning session at the Norwood Hotel. The following goals were set for 2009:

- Researching and developing an education package for best practices programs and evaluations.
- Meeting with the Minister of Housing and Family Services to discuss working together on activities and projects.
- Reviewing accessibility and design standards.
- Continuing to provide input and follow up on all major City of Winnipeg projects.
- Revamping the AAC website.
- Gathering City of Winnipeg policies referred to in the survey.
- Updating the contact database.

Committee Members

Mayor Sam Katz (ex-officio)
Councillor Jenny Gerbasi (Chair)
Councillor Harvey Smith (Alternate)
Ric Carreon
Borys German
Jacqueline Jasinski
Doris Koop
Derek Legge
Liz Mitchell
Vic Pereira
Ken Shachtay
David Tweed

Province of Manitoba Representatives
David Martin
John Wyndels

Committee Coordinator
Dianne Johnson/Chris Sobkowicz

Universal Design Coordinator
Judy Redmond

City Clerk's Office
Krista Kunz

Winnipeg

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