Agenda – Executive Policy Committee – April 7, 2010

REPORTS

Item No. 3 Access Advisory Committee – 2009 Annual Report
File CR-3

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On March 9, 2010, the Access Advisory Committee submitted its 2009 Annual Report to the Executive Policy Committee.

Access Advisory Committee

2009 ANNUAL REPORT



Jenny's Message

The Access Advisory Committee has been extremely busy this year and it's my pleasure to present this report to update you about what we did in 2009.

The Committee worked hard at reaching out to the community. Relationship building, the developing of partnerships and information sharing were done through meetings, a trade show and numerous community events that the AAC attended. We were also pleased to engage the community in the seventh Accessibility Awards, which you'll read about in more detail in this report.

The Disaster and Emergency Management Network is a network of stakeholders – including the AAC – who are committed to finding solutions to make sure the needs of persons with differing abilities are included in emergency management planning. We were proud to contribute financial support to the developing of a new video and workshop manual that will be launched in 2010.

We spent time planning to determine what our priorities are for 2010. Once again, communication and outreach were strong themes as the Committee looks at ways it can develop inclusive tools like an educational package and revamped website to communicate the importance of accessibility and universal design.

This year, we'll be saying good-bye to members who have served their term on the AAC: Ric Carreon, Borys German and Vic Periera. I'd like to extend my personal thanks to Vic for his contribution over the past six years. A tireless advocate for accessibility and a willing spirit, Vic and his guide dog Hannah have been present for a number of exciting developments on the accessibility front.

In my twelve years of chairing this Committee, I have seen tremendous progress made in the area of accessibility and access for all. I'm extremely proud to be a part of this exciting work. My thanks to a Committee whose passion and perspective ensures that Winnipeggers enjoy access to more than they ever have as more people become aware of the importance of universal design. It's more than just wheelchair ramps, wider doors and curb cuts. Accessibility plays a major role in making life more equitable, safe, comfortable and affordable for everyone, regardless of their ability. When City of Winnipeg property, services and information are accessible and inclusive, everybody – regardless of their age, size, ability or background – has an equal opportunity to participate.

Meet AAC Member Liz Mitchell



It was a stroke over five years ago that opened Liz Mitchell's eyes to accessibility issues. "I wasn't happy with a lot of the inaccessible places I went to. I thought there had to be something that could be done."

Life is different now. "For the first 48 years of my life, I was a wife, an athlete, a schoolteacher and all of a sudden, it's over. I still try to do things that I could do so easily before but I can't and it's very frustrating."

When someone mentioned the AAC to her, she made some calls to ask about being on the committee. Her last term on the committee will be 2010.

Adjusting to her new perspective has its challenges. Rough, uneven sidewalks and curb cuts have prompted Liz to replace the wheels on her power wheelchair twice. It has also created a passionate, tireless advocate for accessibility.

The Accessibility Awards and how they've grown is something Liz is proud of. "I worked on that subcommittee for several years. It's a positive way of encouraging the city and people to look at accessibility.

Liz is also a member of a support and advocacy group for women with disabilities: the Disabled Women's Network. About 20 women meet to discuss their challenges and possible solutions.

In a perfect world, Liz would like to see the HandiTransit process improved. "Regular transit has given me my life back," she says. "It's independence and freedom to be able to go where you want and to go at the drop of a hat."

Projects we've consulted on



The AAC is always pleased to consult on projects, particularly when they're in the planning stages. City planners and leaders have been proactive about asking for our opinion and we're happy to make recommendations before construction begins.

We've provided input on:

City Hall accessibility ramps on Main and King, the downtown skywalk, 380 William, various visitable housing projects and the audible traffic signals. We've also been invited to participate in the review and updating of the Accessibility Design Standards.

Accessibility Awards: Back and growing!

It started seven years ago with an idea: raise the profile of accessibility in the community by presenting Accessibility Awards to facilities, organizations and architects who made universal access a priority. Educate people about the details that remove barriers to access and make things easier and safer for us all.



Seventeen projects were nominated. The Access Advisory Committee Awards Subcommittee (Jacqueline Jasinski, Doris Koop, Liz Mitchell, Sandy Popham and Chris Sobkowicz) visited each site, toured the featured accessibility features and took pictures. Then the hard part came: deciding which projects would be honoured and recognized with an Accessibility Award.

It was a two-day event that launched with a trade show on October 28th showcasing products and services for persons with disabilities. Thirteen exhibitors participated in the Information Stations Trade Show – Resources for People with Disabilities and educated business, corporations and municipal and provincial governments about the importance of accessibility with respect to buildings and physical structures, but also with respect to communication. Hosted by the Canada Council of the Blind, Manitoba Division, it was followed by a reception sponsored by the AAC. The event was such a success, which featured speaker Mike Calvo from Serotek Corporation, who also spoke at the Accessibility Awards about technology and universal design.

A special presentation was made to Brian Everton. Brian an interior designer who specializes in universal design. His established reputation as an expert on the topic has been earned through his planning, designing, consulting and work on construction for a number of projects. A founding member of the movement towards inclusive design in Canada, Brian's work is globally-known.

Winners

Bronx Park Community Centre and Good Neighbours Active Living Centre

Forks Renewal Corporation Accessible Washroom Renovation

Path of Full Participation Manitoba Legislature Ramp

Place Bertrand



Honourable Mentions

Assiniboine Park Duck Pond

Pavilion Waverley West 90 Bridgeland Visitable Housing

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada



Inclusive workplace creates happier workers

The City of Winnipeg's 311 Contact Centre was a new construction project. The AAC provided recommendations in the design phase. Committee members toured the facility once the centre was up and running to see how accessibility features impacted the people working there.

Spending an eight hour shift answering incoming calls about City of Winnipeg services, facilities and programs is not an easy job. Knowing where to find the information to answer calls, manage high call volumes and deal with upset callers is all part of a day's work. That's why a particular focus was a priority: make the workplace as comfortable as possible for a wide variety of users and abilities.

"Their work is very stressful and very busy. We try and make it as comfortable as we can,"says Melanie Swenarchuk, 311 Contact Centre Manager.

The workstations have to be seen to be believed. Each desk can be adjusted to suit a person's height. Ergonomic chairs, adjustable screens and monitors in the work area – and training room – make work healthier.

Each new employee meets with an occupational health nurse during their orientation. They learn how to adjust these tools and arrangements equipment such as a special screen if they are sight impaired or a special chair.

"It's an inclusive environment where we try to understand what the needs and wants are and where and how we can accommodate them. They have a chance to submit their comments, and all employees have an opportunity to vote based on suggestions. We'll implement based on what people say they want," Melanie says. "We received one suggestion to use yoga balls instead of chairs. We'll work with occupational health to see if there are risks or liabilities. The result is an inclusive environment where people are comfortable and want to stay."



A New Tool Kit



What do an automated door button, a rotational penatrometer, a Smart Level, a Rolla Wheel and contrasting signage have in common? They're all part of the Tool Kit the AAC is assembling. Some people are visual learners and benefit from the chance to see and touch accessibility features. To work with this idea, the AAC hopes to educate people at trade shows and conferences. "These tools give hands on examples of what's good in terms of accessibility," says Chris Sobkowicz, Committee Coordinator. The Committee intends to add electrified doors, colour contrast schemes, a new signage kit and website alternate formats to the Tool Kit in 2010.

Accessibility Program

For several years in a row, city council has approved $350,000 for the Accessibility Program, which seeks to make changes to existing infrastructure that needs updating to be more accessible. The AAC participates on the Accessibility Program Selection Committee and helps select and prioritize the projects that receive funding.



A sampling of projects includes: automatic door openers at the Assiniboine Park Zoo, an exterior ramp and interior lift at the Carnegie Building Public Archives, a pool ramp and change room renovations at the North Centennial Pool, grab bars in accessible change rooms at the Pan Am Pool, automatic door openers for washrooms at 185 King Street, a portable lift for viewing stands at the Billy Mosienko Arena and automatic door openers for staff washrooms in the 510 Main Street Administration Building.

Goals

The AAC has met and outlined the following goals for 2010:

- Work with City of Winnipeg departments and community partners to develop and deliver an educational package.
- Meet with the appropriate provincial ministers and obtain commitment for joint city/province activities and projects.
- Participate in the review of the Accessibility Design Standards.
- Provide ongoing input on all major City of Winnipeg projects to make sure accessibility design standards are being used.

- Launch a redesigned website that provides information in a more vibrant, interactive and accessible way.
- Expand current partnerships and develop new ones as appropriate with stakeholder groups.
- Raise awareness about the principles of universal design through the Accessibility Awards.
- Develop an information based exhibit for trade shows, workshops and conferences that promotes the Committee's role and the importance and value of universal design.
- Hold a strategic planning session to create an action plan for 2011 and 2012.

Financial Report 2009

Revenues

Council Funding	$ 69,000

Expenditures

Meeting Costs	$ 4,124
Administrative Support	$ 40,000
Administrative Supplies	$ 4,816
Special Projects	$ 5,545
Communication	$ 12,116
Total	$ 66,600
Balance	$ 2,400

Committee Members

Mayor Sam Katz (ex-officio)

Councilor Jenny Gerbasi (Chair)

Councillor Harvey Smith (Alternate)

Janet Hunt
Doris Koop
Vic Periera
Ken Shachtay
Borys German
Jacqueline Jasinski
Liz Mitchell
Sandy Popham
Ric Carreon

Province of Manitoba Representatives
John Wyndels

Committee Coordinator
Chris Sobkowicz

Universal Design Coordinator
Judy Redmond

City Clerk's Office
Krista Kunz

Contact Us

Access Advisory Committee
510 Main Street
Council Building, Lower Level
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 1B9
Phone: 204-986-8345 Fax: 204-947-3452
TTY: 204-261-7424
www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca

311 City Services

Winnipeg