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The Regional Municipality of Durham

MINUTES

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 26, 2021

A meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at Regional Headquarters, Council Chambers, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby at 1:01 PM. In accordance with Provincial legislation, electronic participation was permitted at this meeting.

1. Roll Call

Present: C. Boose, Ajax, Chair
D. Campbell, Whitby, Vice-Chair
A. Beach, Oshawa
H. Hall, Participation House
D. Hume-McKenna, DMHS
Councillor R. Mulcahy attended the meeting at 1:15 PM
M. Peters, Clarington
R. Purnwasie, Ajax
M. Roche, Oshawa
L. Schisler, Whitby
S. Sones, Whitby
***all members of the committee participated electronically**

Staff

Present: S. Austin, Director of Corporate Policy and Strategic Initiatives
J. Christianson, Program Coordinator, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
R. Inacio, Systems Support Specialist, Corporate Services – IT
J. Traer, Accessibility Coordinator, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
N. Prasad, Committee Clerk, Corporate Services – Legislative Services

2. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

N. Prasad called for nominations for the position of Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Moved by D. Campbell, Seconded by R. Purnwasie,
That C. Boose be nominated for the position of Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Moved by M. Roche, Seconded by D. Hume-McKenna,
That nominations be closed.

CARRIED

N. Prasad asked if C. Boose wished to stand. C. Boose indicated she would stand.

C. Boose was acclaimed as the Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

N. Prasad called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Moved by C. Boose, Seconded by L. Schisler,
That D. Campbell be nominated for the position of Vice-Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Moved by R. Purnwasie, Seconded by M. Peters,
That nominations be closed.

CARRIED

N. Prasad asked if D. Campbell wished to stand. D. Campbell indicated she would stand.

D. Campbell was acclaimed as the Vice-Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

C. Boose, Chair, assumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Adoption of Minutes

Moved by D. Campbell, Seconded by R. Purnwasie,
That the minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting held on November 24, 2020, be adopted.

CARRIED

5. Presentations

A) Aly Beach, Durham Deaf Services (DDS) re: Community Services

Aly Beach, Durham Deaf Services (DDS) provided a PowerPoint Presentation with regards to the programs and supports offered at DDS.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- About Durham Deaf Services (DDS)
- Statement of Values
- Programs and Services
 - Deaf Adult Upgrading Program
 - ASL Classes
 - Children's Events, Community Clubs and Workshops
- How has COVID-19 Impacted the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community?

- How has DDS Been Impacted by COVID-19
- How has DDS Adapted to “The New Normal”?
- Community Networking and Our Impact Throughout the Pandemic
- An Overview of the Needs of the Community – Things to Think about
- Literacy and English as a Second Language
- Implementation of ASL
- Public Service and Important Information Announcements
- Other Things to Keep in Mind
- Interpreter Etiquette
- Resources

A. Beach advised that DDS is a non-profit organization that offers services and programs that promote self-reliance within the Deaf, Deafened, and Hard of hearing Community and is committed to increasing Deaf cultural awareness. She stated that the organization’s values lie in advocacy, accessibility, self reliance and professionalism.

A. Beach provided an overview of the programs and services. She stated that the Deaf Adult Upgrading Program is the largest program and is a literacy program for adults who are deaf who wish to improve reading, writing skills and more. She advised that American Sign Language (ASL) classes are offered to the public and are unaccredited but a great starting point to learning ASL. She also stated that DDS hosts children’s events for deaf and hard of hearing children and their siblings and in the past, has hosted a variety of community clubs and workshops with topics such as financial literacy, fraud and scam prevention, elder abuse prevention and more.

With regards to the COVID-19 pandemic, she advised that it has been especially difficult for the deaf community with the biggest impact being social isolation. She advised that the deaf community is very social and often relies on face-to-face communication. Some other challenges include:

- lack of access to devices (technology);
- missing and inaccessible information;
- vulnerable aging population; and
- challenges with masks

A. Beach also stated that DDS has had to close their physical location and move all services online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual services have been a challenge to staff and community members as many clients did not have the technology or the knowledge required to access some services. There were also issues with poor internet connection, lack of accessible sites and software, and they were forced to cancel social gatherings, fund raising events and community events.

With regards to reopening, A. Beach advised that they have implemented social distancing, mask wearing and sanitizing protocols for when the physical location reopens and have adapted all services in a virtual format. In the meantime, she advised that staff has been checking in on community members, focusing on more vulnerable, older adults; boosting online communications; and implementing more video and ASL content on online platforms.

A. Beach responded to questions of the committee.

B) Mark Murray, Manager of Client Engagement, Greater Toronto Area, and
Melanie Baine, Coordinator of Client Engagement, Canadian Hearing
Services (CHS) re: Community Services

Mark Murray, Manager of Client Engagement, Greater Toronto Area, and Melanie Baine, Coordinator of Client Engagement, Canadian Hearing Services (CHS), provided a PowerPoint Presentation with regards to the Community Services of Canadian Hearing Services. Also in attendance were ASL interpreters, Glenda Messier and Karen Panchaud.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Vision and Mission
- About Canadian Hearing Services
- Our Focus
- Services
- 2020 Accomplishments During COVID 19 Pandemic
- American Sign Language
- Communication Tips
- Why Should Ontario be Accessible?
- A Human Rights
- Mental Health in Deaf Community
- Hard of Hearing: Psycho-social Effects of Hearing Loss
- Interpreting Services
- Video Remote Interpreting
- Captioning Services
- Communication Devices Program

M. Murray advised that the Vision of CHS is to provide a barrier-free society for deaf and hard of hearing Canadians. The Mission is to be the leading organization delivering services and products that empower the deaf and hard of hearing community to overcome the barriers. He advised that CHS is an independent, registered non-profit that offers a continuum of support and solutions including mental health and hearing care counselling; audiology; employment and training; interpreting services; captioning; communication devices and hearing aids.

M. Murray provided an overview of the following services provided at CHS: general support services; employment services; CONNECT Counselling & Community Liaisons; educational programs; Hearing Care Counselling Program; Communication Devices Program; Interpretation & Translation Services; and Audiology & Hearing Aid Program.

M. Murray stated that ASL is a visual language with its own grammar and syntax, distinct from English, and used by Deaf people primarily in Canada and the United States. The meaning is conveyed through signs comprised of specific movements and shapes of the hand and arms, eyes, face, head and body postures. He provided a list of communication tips that should be used when communicating with a deaf or hard of hearing person.

M. Murray stated that the services offered by CHS can be conducted in person or via video; that there are high standards of service to ensure the highest quality of service is provided; and advised that the CHS team consists of over 220 interpreters across the country. He provided an overview of Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) and how it works as well as differences with VRI and On-Site Interpreting. He also provided an overview of the Captioning Services – Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) and stated that CHS has a 98% accuracy rate or higher with regards to the captioning.

M. Baine provided review of the Communication Devices Program. She advised that some of the devices include alerting systems, tv listening systems, amplified telephones and more. She advised that the devices improve communication; safety and independence; and accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

M. Baine provided an overview of the following devices: Video Remote Interpreting (VRI); UbiDuo (Face to Face Communication Device); Automated Speech-to-Text Transcribing; Teletypewriter (TTY) for Telecommunications; Counter Loop System (Fixed or Portable); Personal Amplifiers; and FM Systems. She also advised that large-area induction loop systems and large area FM systems can be used in larger meeting spaces.

6. Discussion Items

A) 2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee Workplan – for Review and Approval

A copy of the 2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee Workplan was provided as Attachment #2 to the Agenda.

Moved by R. Purnwasie, Seconded by D. Campbell,
That the 2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee Workplan as
provided be adopted.

CARRIED

7. Correspondence

There were no items of correspondence to consider.

8. Information Items

A) Education Sub-Committee Update

J. Traer provided the following update with regards to future presentations:

- Works Facilities staff will attend the March meeting to provide an update on some of the accessibility improvements that have been implemented at the Region since 2020 as well as future plans;
- Judy Christianson will attend the March meeting to provide an overview of the CityStudio Project survey results;
- Janet will be providing an information report at the March meeting to provide more information on MyDurham311;
- Representatives from myDurham311 will attend the May meeting;
- L. Schisler will be providing a presentation with regards to Community Care Durham and what they provide to the community at the June meeting; and
- The Provincial Offences Courts will provide an update on the reopening of the court at the June meeting.

B) Update on the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC)

M. Roche provided an update on the Transit Advisory Committee via email on January 26, 2021.

He advised that the Transit Advisory Committee meeting was held on January 19, 2021 and advised of the following:

- There has been a severe drop in the number of riders using specialized services due to the pandemic; and
- The eligibility for using specialized services has to be renewed at the end of the year. 300 applications were sent out but only 30% have been received. A number of people have indicated that they have been unable to get to their Doctor to get the application signed.

C) Accessibility Coordinator Update

J. Traer provided the following update:

- As of January 1, 2021, the Region must ensure that the regional website is compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The Region has hired an external consultant to test the website and staff will be reviewing the results to address any concerns. It was suggested that a presentation be provided to the committee with regards to what is involved with the accessible website and creating accessible documents;
- Regional headquarters will not be open to the public before June 30, 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Thursday, January 28, 2021 is Bell Let's Talk Day, an important day to highlight and address mental health issues.

9. Reports for Information

There were no reports to consider.

10. Other Business

There were no items of other business.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, March 23, 2021 at 1 PM.

11. Adjournment

Moved by H. Hall, Seconded by M. Peters,
That the meeting be adjourned.
CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 2:59 PM

C. Boose, Chair
Accessibility Advisory Committee

N. Prasad, Committee Clerk