

Woodstock Staff Advisory Committee and Accessibility Advisory Committee Minutes

Date: May 8, 2024
 Time: 3:00 pm
 Location: 2nd Floor Boardroom, City Hall

Members Present	K. Leatherbarrow	J. Skuse
	J. Harrington	A. Taylor, chair
	S. Pieters	A. Griffioen

Members Absent	M. Doucette	W. Mazur
	A. Zalizky	C. Spagnuolo

Staff Representative H. Buchanan

1. Business

1.1 Staff Accessibility Advisory Committee

1.1.1 Mary Reid, Director/Curator Woodstock Art Gallery

Samantha Henderson, an Educational Intern with the Woodstock Art Gallery (WAG), presented two projects she had worked on during her time here.

S. Henderson has been working on an Accessibility Guide and Social Narrative Project. The main goal was to update the practical accessibility guide regarding public programming at the Art Gallery. Her research included reviewing government documents, AODA legislation, and Accessibility Guides and Plans from other municipalities to provide additional comments for the guide.

S. Henderson said updates to the guide are in progress and will include changes to the building since 2020, as well as the WAG website and app so they can interact with the building and past and current exhibitions. The draft document will include suggestions that will make the guide more accessible.

The second project, the Social Narrative, is designed to guide visitors who may need social cues through a walking tour of the gallery's two floors. She is looking at social stories from around the world to help shape four social narratives for visitors. One narrative would be for walking tours through the gallery's two floors.

The four narratives cover school visits, preschool-aged children, infants to 12-year-olds, and young adults.

Chair A. Taylor thanked S. Henderson for the presentation, including visual and audible clues for Committee members.

1.1.2 Megan Metcalfe, Supervisor of Aquatics and Recreation Programs

Megan Metcalfe, Supervisor of Aquatics and Recreation Programs, said construction on the new splash pad will start this year. It will be located behind the soccer field at the Reeves Community Complex and incorporate a playground and shade shelter.

Brian Connors, Director of Parks and Recreation, added that the large soccer field in that location would change to a youth soccer pitch. J. Harrington inquired why the splash pad had been relocated to the Community Complex. B. Connors explained that the location had been moved several times due to the moisture levels revealed by the soil tests. He said the moisture in the soil would have affected the viability of the splash pad.

Because of the new location's hilly nature, J. Skuse questioned whether ramps would be put into the splash pad. B. Connors said ramps would be built from the parking lot to the pad.

1.1.3 Lorraine Neal, Deputy Chief Building Official (absent)

Harold DeHaan, City Engineering, said renovations to the west end of the Market Centre were close to completion. The following departments - Human Resources, Economic Development, and Small Business - will move into the building in the next few months.

H. DeHaan added that the building is fully compliant with AODA guidelines, with the addition of an accessible elevator and two accessible washrooms.

1.1.4 Emma Vondervoort, Facility Manager of Cowan Park Sportsplex (absent)

Brian Connors, Director of Parks and Recreation, said the main entrance sliding doors at Cowan Park Sportsplex will hopefully be completed in 2024. He explained the project had run into some difficulty as the doors were not a standard size, and it had become a custom project, taking additional time.

B. Connors said the washroom renovations were completed and fully accessible, with the sinks and countertops done to AODA standards. A. Taylor inquired if the Sportsplex would be putting in an adult change table. B. Connors said it would be part of a separate project if they were.

He said work was completed on the multi-purpose room last month, and staff started booking events such as birthday parties, yoga and fitness classes, and summer camps during July and August. He added the room was fully accessible and would be available for program bookings from open to close.

1.1.5 Kerry Jarvi, Downtown Development Officer (regrets)

1.1.6 Harold deHaan, City Engineer

1.1.7 Jeff Slager, Fire Chief (absent)

1.1.8 Colleen Collins, Manager of Marketing and Communications

Colleen Collins, Manager of Marketing and Communications, appreciated Committee member Sue Pieters's participation in a community-focused interview this past winter. The interview was a valuable discussion on the importance of clearing snow from residential sidewalks.

S. Pieters said she had received 10 messages noting her appearance on the program.

C. Collins said there would be messaging around the end of the month highlighting Accessibility Week including information about the Flag Raising and Bench Dedication.

1.1.9 Karen Houston, Museum Curator/Cultural Manager (absent)

1.1.10 Brian Connors, Director of Parks & Recreation

1.1.11 Reta Horan, Supervisor of Parks

Reta Horan, Parks Supervisor, said the department was upgrading outdated playground equipment that did not meet the current ADOA legislation, checking on surfacing materials, and adding more as needed. R. Horan said work would start on Northland Park in 2025, Cowan Sportsplex in 2026, and Southside Concession in 2026. The expectation is that by 2027, the addition to Southside Park (Meadows Golf Course) will need new playground equipment.

R. Horan also mentioned the installation of three new standardized accessible benches. These benches are part of the department's efforts to improve accessibility and user comfort. The plan is to onboard new forestry trails and conduct a full review of the trail system, identifying areas with the largest gaps. The goal is to have benches evenly spaced along the trail system, providing a much-needed respite for park visitors.

R. Horan provided an update on the paving of Roth Park pathways. Due to engineering considerations, the paving has been pushed to 2025. The

department is working on bringing sewer and water across, and they don't want to pave and then have it dug up.

Paving is also planned for Southside Park between the ball diamonds and playground. R. Horan said this would be broken up over several years, starting with the paving crumbling around the pavilion and playground and expanding into the parking areas.

She said walkways connecting playgrounds to sports fields at Chuck Armstrong Memorial Park and McIntosh Park were planned to be paved between 2024 and 2026.

She said trail wayfinding and signage markers were posted on Roth Trail in 2023. She added that it was an excellent system with clearly marked mile markers that can be provided to emergency services. R. Horan said the system would be rolled out to the other trail systems, with Burgess Park Trail System next on the list.

R. Horan said a large portion of Sliver Trail had been developed up to where the Woodstock Meadows subdivision loops around the reservoir. They were currently working on the trail system with the developers for the Karn and Kinsmen Subdivisions.

She said connecting trails in subdivisions allows residents to get around without using roadways, but in some cases, this can be difficult. She gave an example of the steep grade on the large hill on Ingersoll Road.

The Parks Department is developing a trail from the Meadow Lake and Kinsmen Subdivisions in the north end of town, east of the Shanna Larsen Memorial Park, to meet the Sliver Trail. She said the area is full of mature maples offering many natural features, and the intent was to create a community park with a paved pathway leading to pickleball and tennis courts with benches.

R. Horan said in 2024-2025 the Meadows Golf Course, purchased by the City, would become an extension of Southside Park linked with paved trails and naturalized in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited. The extension would provide numerous opportunities for walking and biking, and the community gardens on the site would make it more accessible.

She said the 'Old Woodstock Hospital' subdivision site would hopefully get a community park in 2027, but it depended on the developers. Councillor K. Leatherbarrow inquired if a specific number of homes had to be sold before parks could be included. R. Horan said there had to be 75 percent occupancy before 5 percent of the land for a park is given over to the City. She said it can be difficult

to balance land suitable for parks and walkways and the developers' need for many properties, especially on land with many grade changes.

R. Horan said a basketball court with pathways was being installed at Homer Brown Park. She added it was nice to see new life in a park that was in desperate need and that previously was very wetland with a small playground. It was an older park parcel that had been underutilized and now provided great space for the community.

She said it was hoped the accessible dock would be installed on the south shore of Roth Park before the end of the 2024 season, and they were working with the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) on part of a lease agreement. Because it is very shallow, they are considering installing a stone walkway into the water so the dock doesn't have to be moved.

R. Horan said the UTRCA North Shore pavilion was being decommissioned. She said a new one would be built on the existing concrete pad, including a new playground, once torn down. The same would happen with the Roth Park pavilion.

The new community garden at Donald Thompson Park will open shortly, including 10 raised accessible planters. A. Taylor inquired about how plots were going to be allocated. R. Horan said those individuals displaced from Cottle Park would be given a first chance at the new location, and after that, there would be a waiting list. She anticipated there would be enough plots for everyone once Cottle Park was back up next year. He asked what size the garden plots were. She said the ground plots were 10x10, and the raised planters were slightly smaller.

R. Horan said accessible bleachers were being installed at the Tip O'Neil baseball diamond in Southside Park. J. Harrington said that she had seen swinging benches installed in London parks and asked about the possibility of this being installed near playgrounds at Southside Park. R. Horan said she would look into it.

J. Harrington questioned if bus stops would be incorporated into the new community playgrounds. R. Horan said playgrounds and parks are given to the City by the developers, and the bus stops come in after the fact. B. Connors, Director of Parks and Recreation, warned that the City would have less and less say over how developers manage parkland under the new 'Build Homes Faster' legislation.

1.1.12 Lindsay Harris, Chief Executive Officer Woodstock Public Library (regrets)

Lindsay Harris, Chief Executive Officer of Woodstock Public Library, could not attend the meeting. In an email to the Committee, she noted that the library's website would be refreshed later this Spring, including improved and enhanced accessibility features. She also noted that an adult change table had been installed in the family washroom in the children's area of the library.

1.1.13 Dan Locke, Director of Public Works (absent)**1.1.14 Chris Gratton, Director of Technology (absent)****1.1.15 Ryan Molinaro, Digital Coordinator**

Ryan Molinaro, Digital Coordinator, said the accessibility research student would start in June. He said the student would work on remediating documents and improving the website's accessibility.

C. Collins, Manager of Marketing and Communication, added that their department would also have a summer intern auditing the City's website. She said they would be working on refreshing the website in advance of a future platform update to address accessibility issues, internal needs, and user experience.

1.1.16 Jeff Springsted, Transit Supervisor (absent)**1.1.17 Kristen Brodhagen, Manager of Special Events**

Kristen Brodhagen, Manager of Special Events, said several signature City events would occur during the coming months and encouraged everyone to attend. She said they were a small but mighty team and would welcome suggestions.

S. Pieters said her illness made walking challenging, and events like the carnival at Southside Park for the Victoria Day weekend were difficult due to the lack of seating. K. Brodhagen said there would be picnic tables and benches available. She added that Maglin Site Furniture had generously donated seating for Canada Day and Cowapolooza. She explained that a large grass triangle would be filled with seating.

A. Griffioen said it was uneven walking for anyone in a wheelchair or pushing a wheelchair trying to get to the stage at Cowapolooza and asked if anything could be done to make it easier. K. Brodhagen said they could investigate an exterior

carpeting. B. Connors cautioned this would be considered a capital expense. He added use and storage would need to be reviewed.

1.2 Questions/Concerns

1.2.1 Downtown Wayfinding

H. DeHaan said one wayfinding sign was in the first phase of the downtown reconstruction, but the details of the sign had not yet been determined.

M. Reid said wayfinding and interpretative signings in phases 2 and 3 are being developed, and they were working with the consultants regarding braille and other languages.

1.2.2 Inclusive Community Grants Program

B. Connors said they look at all grants that come in, but it was almost a full-time job just determining where we can use them. He said they were looking at an access ramp at Cowan Park Sportsplex.

1.2.3 Adult Change Tables

B. Connors said an adult change table was installed at Cowan Field. They had attempted to include one in the washroom redevelopment at Southside Park, but it would not fit. They would start to put them in one at a time because they would be a capital budget item at the cost of \$10,000 plus installation.

1.2.4 Youth Start Trail

B. Connors did not have a cost to pave the Youth Start Trail, which would be a non-starter due to the nature of the location. He explained that the area is surrounded by trees and paving, and trees do not mix well. Either the trees die, or the paving pops on the trails.

He said they would be paving the pathways from Southside Park to the new extension across Parkinson Road. J. Skuse asked if it would go under or over the bridge. B. Connors said it would go under the bridge and expected it would be a hit for events like the Dairy Capital Run.

2. Adjournment

Moved By K Leatherbarrow

Seconded By J Harrington

That the meeting adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

Carried