

Accessibility Advisory Committee Minutes

Wednesday, September 4, 2024, 9:30-10:30am

Teams Meeting

Present: Stephanie Keilhack (Chair), Amanda Purdy (Vice-Chair), Maggie Pitts, Catherine Aquino Russell, Helen Sims, David MacEwan, MacKenzie Aitken, Melanie Prendergast (Recording Secretary)

Regrets: Andrea Meekins, Darrell Fagan, Lisa Betts

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 am.

2. Approval of Agenda

Moved by David MacEwan, seconded by MacKenzie Aitken, to approve the agenda as circulated.

3. Approval of Notes

The July 3, 2024 meeting did not meet quorum, therefore the notes taken were for information purposes only. The discussion at that meeting of adding frequently used records of Municipal Public Communications to the "Good and Services" section of the plan will be added to the next meeting's agenda.

4. Review of Action Items

Action Items were reviewed and updated.

5. New Business

a) Discussion: NS Human Rights Case and Remedy – Preparing for residents to move into community.

Transportation is crucial and will be a significant issue. Due to the Human Rights Remedy, people with disabilities living in group settings of four or more in Nova Scotia are being moved into the community. The goal is to complete this transition by 2026, with a buffer until 2027 for exceptional cases. The province plans to close centers across Nova Scotia, aiming to reduce the number of such facilities by a certain percentage within a specific timeframe. Many people are unaware of this initiative, so it is essential to inform everyone to ensure proper preparation.

b) Joint Accessibility Plan 2025 Revision - Transportation

Transportation for these individuals presents a significant challenge. The Adult Residential Center in Pugwash is relocating just over 50 residents into the community, this process is already in progress. The larger numbers mentioned (approximately 200 people) include other organizations in Cumberland, such as long-term care facilities (for individuals under 65), group homes, and residential care facilities (RCFs) with more than four residents. Additionally, consideration is given to individuals in similar facilities across the province who wish to return to the Cumberland area.

These individuals require transport for multiple services, but there are limited vehicles available. Additionally, many of these individuals need an attendant to accompany them. Another issue is that many use custom-made wheelchairs that are too large for existing vehicles, necessitating more space for maneuvering. In some cases, using a transport chair is not an option, so vehicles that can accommodate larger wheelchairs are essential.

With more vehicles needed and individuals dispersed throughout the community, additional staff will be required. Pugwash is not prepared for this transition in terms of accessibility, as roads and sidewalks are in poor condition, and access ramps into buildings are needed. Another challenge is the limited availability of accessible taxi cabs in rural areas.

Some suggested solutions that would be ideal include the following: Have doctors visit a nearby location to see individuals, rather than transporting people to multiple locations, and to create an online forum for virtual appointments. Until the exact numbers are known, it will be difficult to determine the necessary actions. As people move out, the staffing requirements will depend on their individual situations. New vehicles for Cumberland County Transportation Services are to be hybrids, which drive differently from current vehicles, so training will be required, along with crash-tested tie-downs for wheelchairs.

6. New Business

None

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:34am.

**Accessibility Advisory Committee
Action List
Wednesday, September 4, 2024**

<u>Action Item</u>	<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Status</u>
1. Coordinate invitation to meetings and agenda being sent to Public two weeks prior to meetings.	March 6, 2024	Stephanie	Ongoing
2. Discuss Transportation at next meeting and save Employment for last.	July 3, 2024	Stephanie	In Progress
3. Connect with different Municipalities re. what they do for accessible Information and Communications.	July 3, 2024	Stephanie	In Progress
4. Connect with Department of Community Services to inquire about their biggest communication barriers.	July 3, 2024	Stephanie	In Progress
5. Add records of frequent Municipal Public Communications to the “Goods and Services” Section. Update: Deferred until October 2024 meeting.	Oct 8, 2024	Stephanie	In Progress
6. Create poll to determine interest in having a future meeting at Sunset Community in Pugwash. Update: Stephanie to coordinate date for this.	Fall 2024	Stephanie	In Progress
7. Email organizations to inquire what would work well for the Access Awareness week 2025.	July 3, 2024	Stephanie	In Progress
8. Have conversation with province as to how often funding for vehicles can be requested and for how much.	Sept. 2024	Helen	
9. Inquire if Disability Support Program can meet with committees and communities across the province to educate everyone on this transition.	Sept. 2024	Stephanie, Amanda	
10. Arrange for Department of Community Services to meet with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to communicate the urgency of this transition and how the Human Rights Remedy will affect us.	Fall 2024	Stephanie, Amanda	
11. Explore possibility of larger grants from the Municipality for Cumberland County Transportation Services to assist with costs of new vehicles and additional staffing.	Fall 2024	Committee	