



Adam A. Donaldson @adamadonaldson

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Coming up at 3 pm, it's this month's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting. This is what's on the agenda:



Chair Root has called the meeting to order.

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest and General Nature Thereof? None.

Agenda approved.

Minutes from the last meeting approved.

Three items on the consent agenda:

Recommendation

That the April 16, 2024 AAC Consent Agenda identified below be adopted.

- 2.1 **Seasonal Patio Program Follow-Up** 
- 2.2 **Follow up regarding Single Use Items Letter** 
- 2.3 **Site Plan Internal Review Report** 

Nothing from the consent agenda pulled, so the slate is approved unanimously.

First item, Municipal Election Follow-Up. Root steps down as chair and Vice-Chair Cameron takes over to the guide this segment. Root says she's too invested to take a back seat as Chair for this item.

City Clerk O'Brien presents and he says this process has been very rewarding and beneficial. He says they've been listen in the past five sessions and are trying to balance the various options. There is no one-size-fits-all approach.

O'Brien says he and his staff appreciate AAC's desire to have all five options and that is their role. He says the committee's advice will be provided to council word for word, even if it's separate from staff advice.

Considerations in making this decision:

- Risk analysis
- Principles of the Municipal Elections Act • Budget
- Staffing capacity
- Verifiability
- Reliability
- AAC's recommendation

O'Brien says they reviewed the five methods in January, applied various criteria, looked at what's required in the Municipal Act, factor in budget and resourcing concerns. He does note that there have been tech issues in other municipalities with internet voting.

O'Brien: Making sure that every vote is counted, and counted as quickly as possible so that the results get out without delay is important. It's part of maintaining election integrity.

Staff Recommendation:

City Clerk's Office Motion

That Council receive information on accessible voting service enhancements for the 2026 municipal and school board election.

That Council approve the use of vote by mail and vote from home as the alternative voting methods for the 2026 municipal and school board election.

Next steps:

- City Clerk's Office to present report to council in May
- City Clerk's Office request that AAC Chair present with us in May
- City Clerk's Office committed to continue to discuss voting enhancements at AAC meetings
- Increase communication in 2026

O'Brien says that he doesn't feel like staff and the AAC have been adversarial about this, and states again that they will include AAC advice word for word with appropriate links to videos and reports.

O'Brien says that this is not the last step in the line, and they learned in 2022 that they can always do more and share more with stakeholders.

Root notes that she hasn't been able to independently vote since 2014 when Guelph had internet voting. She says its exhausting fighting for what should be a protected right. She did a lot of work on her own and found Remote Accessible Vote by Mail and felt it was secure.

Root says her last option was having her ex-boyfriend mark her ballot, but she doesn't know if he did it right. It's about independence. O'Brien says Root's probably more of an expert on these, and internet is mostly based on 3 big hosts. Mostly about vendors, not servers.

O'Brien says the vendor who strikes voters off the list when a ballot is issued experienced bandwidth problems, and the City saw it with their system with in-person voting in 2022. Apparently, there is only one vendor that does this work. They're beholden to providers.

Root says she still finds that frustrating because there's fallibility in every system, and it's still a matter of reliability for her. She asks about meetings, and has seen no change in opinions since meetings began and this looks like what clerks were planning from the start.

What has changed? O'Brien says he's empathetic, they're looking at making city hall a vote from anywhere location, having masked and scent-free locations, brail sleeves. These are accessibility enhancements. Also removing barriers in access, getting to a location easier.

Slater, also from the clerks office, says that not seeing put reflected in the outcome feels like the clerks are not listening, but at the end of the day they're offering advice to council and being upfront and transparent as possible.

Root says that's the same response they've gotten the last two elections, so it gets frustrating to get that same response and it doesn't feel like they have equal platforms at council.

Ashkewe asks the use of Google, and O'Brien talks again about the slowdown of the software, and while Guelph did slowdown with the live-voter strike off list; in some places it stopped. Ashkewe asks is that's people or tech issues. O'Brien says its tech.

Ashkewe notes that we're next to a Google hub and fibre optic connections, O'Brien says he's not sure, but know Hamilton was even more effected. Because more voters in Hamilton? Again, O'Brien says he's not sure.

Cameron asks if advanced polls can relieve server strain. O'Brien says they always want people to vote early, but the vast majority of electors go on Election Day. They also want the system to work no matter when people want to vote.

Member Lytle asks Root when the last time she was able to vote independently. She says 2014 and adds that Guelph is the only municipality to have internet voting and then take it away. Lytle says if the chair of the AAC can't vote then there's something wrong in the system.

In terms of timing to present, O'Brien says he's happy to have Chair Root, or whoever the committee designates, be given equal standing at May's Committee of the Whole meeting on this topic.

Motion from Root, seconded by Ashkewe.

Item 3.1: Municipal Election Follow-Up



Motion – Moved by Member Root

1. The AAC does not support the staff recommendation that vote from home and vote by mail be offered as the only alternative voting methods for the 2026 election. We believe that this leaves insurmountable barriers to accessibility and denies many members of the community access to a confidential, independent, and verifiable voting method. Failure to provide a voting method to disabled individuals serves to disenfranchise a vulnerable population.

The AAC recommends that council move forward with online voting and remote accessible vote by mail as the main alternative voting options, with vote from home and vote by mail remaining available as supplementary accessible options.

2. The AAC recommends that council consider the following opinions on accessible voting options to council at the May 17, 2024 Council Meeting.

That motion is approved and so is an additional motion to appoint Root as the speaker at CoW for the AAC in a couple of weeks.

Next, Downtown Waste Project - Design Guideline. Project manager Reed notes that there are numerous accessible issues with fallen bins, full bins and other concerns.

The question is if there's any accessibility or universal design requirements that staff need to take into account with their Design guidelines. They have fixed locations, common products, three streams together, and a standard amount of space (right now 25-50 metres).

They also want to make sure that they don't mess with transit and mobility stops and that there is visibility.

Lytle asks if there might be any difficult like pushing a lid open or other manual concerns. Reid says that there will be a hole, not lid, they do have requirements for openings through the FADM like being able to access a container one-handed, and that's guided this work.

Recommendations:

Recommendation

1. That Staff **proceed** with the Downtown Waste Project Design Guideline using the universal design and accessibility considerations summarized in this report; **or**
2. That Staff **add** to the Downtown Waste Project Design Guideline consideration for the following universal design and accessibility requirements before proceeding: (list to be drafted during meeting)

Root moves the first recommendation. She says it sounds like the committee's fine with proceeding. Lowenger seconds.

The recommendation is approved.

Next item: Guelph Transit: Introduction of Chime Sound on Conventional Buses. Laura Catalano-Bragues, Supervisor of Scheduling and Service Planning at Transit will present.

What is this chime?

Introduction of Chime Sound



Guelph Transit is planning to implement a chime sound that will play before priority messages.



A priority message is a message played by the operator on-board to provide information to customers or request an action from customers.



These announcements do not play regularly or at each stop and are only used when an operator chooses to play them.

Priority message is meant to provide info to customers or to request an action from customers, so different from the stop announcements. This for things like “move to the back of the bus” or “exit through the rear doors”.

Catalano-Bragues says that they present to the Transit Advisory Committee, and they asked for more options, and a message “*Important:” to proceed the message.

Next stop announcement will not change, display will show the audible message, and the priority message will not change.

Ashkewe asks he takes the bus regularly, and he says #3 will work best because he uses headphones and it should reach people over the background bus noise too.

Catalano-Bragues notes that there are two types of visual screens on transit buses so there is some limitations to the variety of artistic flourish on graphics (as Ashkewe also suggested.).

Catalano-Bragues in responding to a question says that the messages are deployed on a case-by-case basis. Like if there's someone getting on with a mobility device, then they would play the message about exiting through the back.

Svehla says that the first tone is more pleasant, which is important in household because members of her family are neuro-divergent, so it will be less intrusive. Lowenger agrees with that and asks if these come from other transit systems.

Catalano-Bragues notes option #2 is from GRT, but they are all open sources sounds and they're trying to figure out what works best for Guelph and did research about what was readily available.

Here's a short video of the sounds:

<https://twitter.com/adamadonaldson/status/1780328351451754732>

Ashkewe asks if making outer doors wider to allow for accessibility be an issue. Mallon says any change for access. is not typically stopped by a heritage designation. Ashkewe asks about the Albion specifically & Mallon notes that it's already got it's own separate designation.

Root asks Mallon if he needs anything in regards of a motion for feedback. Mallon says not yet, that will be more in the realm of the guidelines, this is mostly an info report.

Committee votes unanimously to receive the report for information.

Next, and last, Tuesday, May 21 - AAC Special Meeting. Sarah Boghossian, Accessibility Co-ordinator, notes that this meeting is about accessibility with playgrounds and the Parks and Rec Master Plan, a follow up on some recommendations from council.

Boghossian notes that this will run like a standard meeting, meaning they need a quorum of 8. Also, there was a request from parks to add an item, Drew Park Revitalisation. Root says that she wants to make sure that they have enough time to cover the bases with item one.

Boghossian says the second item would be about 30 minutes, which would be 1.5 hours for the rest of the meeting. She adds that they can attach Drew Park to the June meeting of AAC feels that's better.

Root says she's gotten notification that a couple of councillors are planning on coming to that meeting, so there's going to be a lot going on. She would rather wait for the June meeting.

Cameron says there's going to a lot of discussion with the five items referred to that meeting already, they've had five items on this agenda and there's only 20 minutes left. Boghossian says it's okay, they can move it.

Root asks if there's a deadline for the Drew Park matter. Boghossian says no, they just thought they could squeeze it in since it's on topic as a parks matter.

So no additional topic for the next meeting.

Anything else? New staff member will be co-ordinating with AAC members who do site plan review.

That's a wrap for this meeting. Back in 80 minutes for this month's regular council meeting!



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