



Subject: Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee

To: Council

From: Corporate Services Department

Report Number: 2021-177

Meeting Date: June 28, 2021

Recommendation:

That Corporate Services Department Report 2021-177 be received;

That Council approve The City of Port Colborne joining the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee; and

That the Manager of Human Resources be delegated to select two City appointees to sit as members of the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee for 2021-2022.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the City to become a member of a multi-municipality accessibility committee in order to ensure the City meets all Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards and achieves excellence in accessibility.

Background:

Section 29 of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requires that a municipality with a population exceeding 10,000 establish an advisory committee that provides input and advises Council about the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards. Section 29 of the Act also states that two or more municipalities may establish a joint committee in order to achieve this goal.

The Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC) was created to support municipalities in the Niagara area with similar populations that do not have a dedicated staff member to address accessibility compliance. The JAAC currently has six member

municipalities including the Town of Grimsby, Town of Lincoln, Township of West Lincoln, Town of Pelham, City of Thorold, and Town of Niagara-on-the-lake.

The Joint Committee is made up of two citizen members from each municipality, a staff member, and an accessibility expert.

Discussion:

Staff are committed to promoting accessibility standards throughout the City through avenues including access to information such as accessible documents and an accessible website, evaluation of built environment, site plan review, provincial reporting, and accessible customer service. While multiple staff work on these goals there is no dedicated staff position to ensure compliance and provide expertise.

Over the past several years, multiple employees have been given the task of ensuring compliance. These staff members have shown interest in promoting accessibility and have worked with the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee to help the City remove barriers. While the City has moved in a positive direction it is important that the necessary resources be provided to continue this positive direction.

Staff believe that in joining this multi-municipal committee the City will have access to expertise not currently available within the City. In addition, the City will have an opportunity to work with other municipalities and benefit from knowledge sharing.

While the current Accessibility Advisory Committee would be dissolved, members of the Committee would sit on the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee providing for further knowledge sharing at the citizen level.

The Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee is comprised of members from each member municipality, a staff member, and an accessibility expert. If approved, the Committee will help the City with interpretation of legislation, accessibility audits on buildings, documents, processes, reporting, site plan reviews, training, and accessibility awards.

Financial Implications:

The financial input into the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee is approximately \$5000 annually which will be funded from the global consulting budget in 2021 and added to the Corporate Services budget moving forward.

The partnership with this Committee is fiscally responsible as expertise will be provided to the City without the need to fund a full-time staff member.

Public Engagement:

The current Accessibility Advisory Committee has been contacted and asked to submit a statement of interest in becoming a member of the Joint Committee. Each municipality may appoint two members to sit on the Committee and staff recommend that the recruitment for 2021-2022 be from the existing advisory committee membership.

If approved the JAAC have requested to present to Council at a meeting in the fall to provide an update and answer any questions.

Conclusion:

Staff are confident that working with the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee will ensure the City meets AODA compliance while helping us move forward in creating barrier-free access for everyone.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report Approval:

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.