

WHISTLER

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE (AIC)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5, 2024, STARTING AT 9:00 A.M.

Meeting held at Whistler Municipal Hall, Piccolo Room
4325 Blackcomb Way, Whistler

PRESENT	*Mtgs. YTD (2)
Accommodation Sector, J. Cottier	2
Member-at-Large, S. Lawther	2
Tourism Whistler (TW), K. Homeniuk	2
Vail Resorts, O. Dagan	1
Whistler Adaptive Sports Program (WA), S. Milstein	2
Whistler Chamber of Commerce, A. Feuz	2
Whistler Mature Action Community (MAC), D. Ashton	2
Whistler MAC, I. Grunwell	1
Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) Councillor, J. Morden	2
RMOW Manager of Planning - Policy and AIC Secretary, C. Beaubien	2
RMOW Library Director, M. Fenton	2
RMOW Accessibility Coordinator, S. Tipler	2
RMOW Planning Assistant, C. Van Leeuwen	2
RMOW Planning Coordinator and AIC Recording Secretary, L. Bourdon	1
Cardea Health Consulting, K. Milne (Presenter)	
TW, K. Selig (Presenter)	

REGRETS	
Member-at-Large, O. Rey	1
Whistler Community Services Society (WCSS)	1
Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre	0
*For organizations, the number reflects the number of meetings attended by the organizations' representatives within the calendar year	

CALL TO ORDER

AIC recognized the Resort Municipality of Whistler is grateful to be on the shared, unceded territory of the Líl'wat People, known in their language as Líl'wat7úl, and the Squamish People, known in their language as Skwxwú7mesh. We respect and commit to a deep consideration of their history, culture, stewardship, and voice.

NOMINATION AND SELECTION OF CHAIR AND CO-CHAIR

Moved by S. Milstein
Seconded by O. Dagan

That AIC select S. Lawther as Chair and D. Ashton as Co-Chair.

CARRIED

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by D. Ashton
Seconded by J. Cottier

That AIC adopt the Regular Committee Agenda of Wednesday, June 5, 2024.

CARRIED

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by J. Cottier
Seconded by S. Milstein

That AIC adopt the Regular Committee Minutes of February 7, 2024, as circulated.

CARRIED

COUNCIL UPDATE

Councillor Morden discussed the following regarding recent Council business:

1. The Whistler Housing Authority informed Council that the Hemlocks building (2B) will be occupied starting October 1. The five accessible units were not up to standards regarding kitchen elements. The kitchen cupboards and appliances had to be upgraded.
2. Lot 5 (1475 Mount Fee Rd) will follow Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation standards of five per cent of units being accessible. There will be considerations to reevaluating this standard.
3. The Meadow Park Redevelopment Project is being delayed until fall and Rainbow Park will reopen on Canada Day.

PRESENTATIONS/DELEGATIONS

Emergency
Preparedness for
Older Adults

K. Milne presented on the Whistler Emergency Preparedness for Older Adults Assessment and Awareness Campaign project. Presentation highlights are summarized below:

1. This project is designed to address two actions from the Age-friendly Assessment and Action Plan (2021). Specifically, the project's purpose is to: explore existing emergency preparedness plans and how they meet older adults' needs; and consider a campaign to bring awareness to older adults about current emergency preparedness plans.
2. The purpose of the meeting with the AIC is to present initial engagement findings from the focus groups and interviews, and then provide AIC members the opportunity to offer feedback on the presented information.
3. Key findings from the older adult/caregiver engagement were:
 - a. Older adults were mostly concerned about wildfires and evacuations.

- b. Regarding communication and information, participants use available tools to various degrees depending on levels of comfort with electronic devices. There were requests for clear evacuation advice. Participants also expressed worries if phones are dead or lost, and for individuals not using social media or following the news.
 - c. Regarding transportation, participants discussed having emergency supplies ready in the car, obtaining timely notice of evacuation, and various ways to evacuate.
 - d. Regarding community preparedness, participants discussed concerns about empty neighbourhoods, preference for personal evacuation, and a desire to understand community evacuation plans.
 - e. Regarding logistics, participants discussed the evacuation of pets as well as communicating with and evacuating people who may need help and have not previously been identified. The presence and impacts of tourists on logistics were also concerns.
 - f. Most participants showed some degree of preparedness like having a 'go bag' with medication, food and water at home or in their car. Participants were interested in learning better ways to manage perishable items in the bags.
 - g. Participants' current preparedness was the result of their proactivity, previous experience, school education being shared at home or discussions with neighbours.
 - h. Participants showed a strong interest in being involved in developing resources on emergency preparedness.
4. Key findings from the service provider engagement were:
- a. Service providers' major themes were planning for weather events (smoke, heat domes, extreme cold), defining vulnerability and effectively providing resources and services to the community.
 - b. Participants discussed collaboration and community involvement, and the importance of more communication materials with infographics to better support cultural and language diversity.
 - c. Participants noted gaps in the availability of psychological and mental health support after emergency events.
 - d. Participants discussed the idea of a registry of people vulnerable during emergencies and noted concerns about confidentiality and keeping the registry up to date.
 - e. A main message was there must be self-sufficiency in the community because of the complexity of emergency situations.
5. The next step will be to develop an assessment report with an awareness campaign strategy, which will be brought to Council.

The AIC discussed:

1. Paper handouts help individuals prepare, but they are not convenient during emergencies as they are not timely.
2. Whistler Alert is the official notification system during emergencies, but it is uncertain how many people are aware of its existence. An effort should be made to redirect people towards this tool. Some people rely on social media, but the information is sometimes not up to date.

3. If cellphone towers go down, the information will not reach certain people. Landlines are another option to spread alerts. A recorded message on a local information line which updates constantly could be considered.
4. Through its website, TW encourages businesses and visitors to sign up for alerts.
5. Creating a registry of all available resources with information related to emergency preparedness could be considered.
6. Using school buses for evacuation transportation will not work for everyone. They are not accessible for wheelchair users for instance.
7. Caregivers or relatives who live outside Whistler can sign up for Whistler Alert for a person with special needs.
8. For those who cannot be helped by family, neighbours can come together to help each other and plan and coordinate evacuation together. A registry could be considered, with a small group of people assigned to help those on the registry. With a registry, there are concerns about confidentiality and keeping it up to date.
9. Ease of firefighter access to some areas should be considered.
10. There is a lot of information available and a list of resources could be created.
11. Now, the priority is to communicate the sense of urgency. Education is considered the most important piece. Whistler's population often lives in the moment, and many will likely not have a plan when an emergency emerges, which makes it harder to provide people with information.
12. The Hotel Association of Whistler is reflecting on logistics to evacuate guests and staff. As there are not enough vehicles, people with cars will need to be convinced to take others. The majority of staff are not prepared for an emergency, and the individual hotels in the association are creating or refining plans that include an educational aspect. Vail Resorts is faced with the same challenges, and it is also hard to track the number of guests. Vail Resorts considers itself responsible for guests even after the guests have reached the valley.
13. It is uncertain what condition Whistler's hotels will be in after an emergency event.
14. Traffic management is another element that should be assessed. Some people are considering using electric bikes to avoid the congestion or to go north instead of south.
15. There is a misconception that because Whistler is considered the jewel of B.C., no one will let it burn.

Accessibility of
whistler.com

- K. Selig discussed TW's plans to better showcase accessible products and experiences through whistler.com:
1. TW is reviewing its accessibility information and digital accessibility, and is seeking feedback to improve users' experiences.
 2. The whistler.com/accessibility webpage displays accessible product information, the Access Whistler Map and information on WA.
 3. The first step (starting in May) is to request businesses complete the Accessible Attribute Assessment form developed by Destination BC and upload it in the mobility section when creating a listing in Destination BC. This form is a self-assessment checklist of accessibility requirements currently targeting accommodations, attractions and transportation providers. It was created in partnership with the Canadian National

Institute for the Blind, the Rick Hansen Foundation and Spinal Cord Injury BC. The assessment does not currently target the restaurant industry, but it can be useful to complete in any case. Any business should complete it, no matter how accessible it is, as it gives an accurate picture of what exists and areas to improve.

4. In June, TW will internally design a way to display the information on whistler.com. The updates should go live in September.
5. The AIC can provide feedback once the listings are live.
6. The next step will focus on digital accessibility (color contrast, functionality) and should occur in the second half of the year.
7. TW also wants to add more content to their blog. It recently published a "Whistler by Wheelchair" topic.

The AIC discussed:

1. Committee members are interested in sharing the work done and encourage businesses to complete the form.
2. Hotels could be asked to share as many pictures as possible to give an accurate idea of current accessibility. Bed height is an essential measurement to include.
3. This initiative will help give the current picture of the tourism industry in terms of accessibility and will be a great catalyst for change by pointing out what is missing.
4. Whistler businesses could consider having more images that show diversity in ethnicity, ability and age.
5. Access Now is a free tool which displays a business's accessibility rating and basic features. It is user-maintained.
6. Vail Resorts' accessibility web content is separated by seasons, like information about WA and the know-before-you-go videos produced by Vail Resorts. More work is needed for the information to be complete and up to date. Vail Resorts' website refers to the RMOW website.
7. The RMOW is producing three more know-before-you-go videos.

OTHER BUSINESS AND MEMBER UPDATES

- S. Milstein discussed the conversation between WA and Squamish Connector:
1. Squamish Connector is interested in buying accessible vehicles, but needs funding.
 2. Councillor Morden will consider the availability of funding for this project.
- S. Tipler discussed the Planning Department's meeting with Resort Cabs:
1. Resort Cabs will share accessible taxi demand and usage information with the RMOW. According to April reporting, there were only a few requests for these vehicles although Resort Cabs had accessible taxis available.
 2. AIC members can help increase awareness of the availability of this transportation option.
 3. Resort Cabs will make sure there are more accessible taxis available during larger events if it receives notification of the events in advance.
- M. Fenton discussed the Whistler Public Library (WPL) Strategic Plan:
1. The WPL finished collating the data for the community engagement portion and is now in the drafting process.
 2. The report to the community should be available in September.

3. The WPL also celebrated National Accessibility Week.

The AIC discussed:

1. There is an opportunity to refocus the WPL's contribution to the community as a community resource.
2. The WPL currently provides a unique type of accessible space to the community, and the WPL is considered a central facility.

J. Cottier discussed hotel evacuation plans:

1. Hotels are working on evacuation plans with guest evacuation as the first priority. The next priority is staff evacuation.
2. Regarding hotels renovating to expand inventories of accessible rooms, it is important to recognize that the hotels are still in the post-pandemic recovery phase.

D. Ashton discussed Whistler MAC's programs and website improvements:

1. Volunteers are redesigning the website including the Resources Hub, which will be an evolving resource. June 20 is the targeted launch date.
2. The launch of the website and the [Whistler Seniors 55+ Resource Guide](#) (produced by the WCSS) will be showcased at an event at the WPL on June 20. MAC will also launch a membership campaign at this event.
3. In July and August, MAC will use Spruce Grove as a temporary Seniors Centre and will use Myplace Youth Centre for the same purpose in the fall. MAC is running more programs, so it needs community space.
4. MAC is seeking *pro bono* legal services from the RMOW.

The AIC discussed:

1. Councillor Morden will follow-up on the request for legal services.

O. Dagan discussed Vail Resorts' adaptive equipment showcase event:

1. Vail Resorts and the University of Utah held an adaptive equipment and chairlift prototypes display on June 7 at Skiers Plaza.
2. The prototypes are modular and target a range of users with sightseeing as the focus. There are also plans to work with Invictus Games.

A. Feuz discussed recent Whistler Chamber of Commerce initiatives:

1. The Chamber hosted a lunch under the theme of mental health at work.
2. The Chamber provided internal education about accessibility inclusion and can share information from the AIC through its newsletter.

The AIC discussed:

1. The [Enabling Accessibility Fund](#) is open for applications.

S. Tipler provided an update on the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification grant:

1. The second assessment will be done in the coming weeks, and the majority of the project is complete.

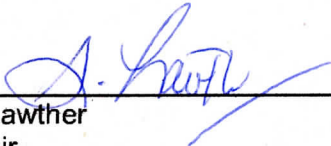
The AIC discussed:

1. People and businesses assume the RMOW is responsible for all accessibility matters. There is an apparent need to clarify information with the community about what is within municipal jurisdiction.

MOTION TO TERMINATE

Moved by D. Ashton
Seconded by O. Dagan

That the AIC meeting of Wednesday, June 5, 2024 be terminated at 10:53 a.m.
CARRIED



S. Lawther
Chair

C. Beaubien

C. Beaubien
Secretary