



## Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

### Meeting Date, Time and Location

Tuesday, June 27, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. at the Town Hall – Conference Room #1

### Members

Lori Brant, Chair  
Dennis Hernandez-Galeano, Vice Chair (at 4:45 p.m.)  
Bev Ferris (regrets)  
Ashley Greaves  
Adam McLeod  
Gary Kooistra  
Joe Kissman  
Marilyn Abbs  
Jennica Giesbrecht  
Councillor Ann-Marie Noyes (regrets)

### Staff Resources

Keegan Gennings, Chief Building Official  
Sean Hutton, Facilities Supervisor (regrets)  
Bev Bradnam, Manager, Strategic Initiatives  
Justin, Personal Support Worker

### 1) Call to Order

The June 27, 2023 AAC Meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

### 2) Approval of Minutes

#### Recommendation No. 1:

Moved by: Joe Kissman  
Seconded by: Marilyn Abbs

**THAT:** The May 30, 2023 Minutes of the Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting be approved as printed.

**(CARRIED)**

**3) Outstanding Matters**

1) Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee

Bev advised that she reached out to the Region’s Accessibility Coordinator to find out a) if they have new Committee members, b) when they will be meeting again and posting meeting agendas and minutes on the website, and 3) if there is any Fort Erie representation. In the past we have always had a liaison between the Fort Erie AAC and Regional AAC. Bev confirmed that she had circulated details to Fort Erie AAC members about the application process for the Region’s AAC but did not believe anyone had applied. The Accessibility Coordinator was out of the office and Bev reached out to the Clerk’s Department for a response.

2) Parking Concerns

The accessible parking spaces have been completed in downtown Ridgeway and signage and painting has been completed. Following the construction, Infrastructure staff reached out about the placement of the garbage cans, shown in the first picture below. Lori advised that the cans would not impede a side lift van. Special thanks to Ryan Lemay in Infrastructure Services for completing this project, which was one of the most requested actions during the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) public consultation.



As noted at the May AAC meeting, an e-mail related to the accessible parking space on Erie Road that was also part of Council’s approved MYAP recommendations was discussed. Infrastructure Services staff are working on improvements to the municipal lots in Crystal Beach and will be reviewing the number of spaces that get installed and install the appropriate number of accessible spaces as per the AODA requirements. The Committee asked that Bev follow-up on the original accessible space that was planned for Erie Road as it was felt this area still requires an accessible parking space.

**3) Outstanding Matters, continued**

2) Parking Concerns, continued

Joe asked about the status of Arby's parking and entrance that was discussed at the May meeting. Keegan confirmed that he checked with Planning and the accessible parking space should be re-instated. As it is an existing restaurant, they are not required to have an accessible entrance. Committee members asked that a letter be sent to Arby's encouraging them to provide a barrier free entrance.

3) Stevensville Garden Gallery

Bev advised that she followed up with Stevensville Garden Gallery last week and was advised by e-mail that "Door Doctor is coming next week to finalize the plan. They need 3 weeks lead time but we're hoping to have it completed by August 1". Bev sent a response advising that this is wonderful news and will help achieve a more accessible experience for their patrons. Remain on outstanding until door improvements are complete.

4) Adult size Change Table at Bay Beach

Keegan advised that he reached out to the Landscape Architect who advised that the Manager researching a suitable replacement is no longer with the Town and they are hoping to get the search back on based on the table fitting into the space and the budget for the replacement. Remain on outstanding.

5) Stop Gap Ramp Project

Bev advised that she has updated the slide deck based on the Committee's feedback and has forwarded details to the new Director, Legal and Legislative Services/Town Solicitor for review and comment and will be meeting with her on Thursday to update the slide presentation for the BIA meetings and provide advice related to the agreement that the businesses have to enter into with the Stop Gap Foundation. It was confirmed that the AAC will present at the:

- Ridgeway BIA meeting on Wednesday, July 5, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. at the Crystal Ridge Library community room; and
- Crystal Beach BIA meeting on Wednesday, July 12, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the Crystal Ridge Library community room.

Lori asked what type of information will be left with the BIA about the program. Bev advised that she hasn't had an opportunity to develop applications, etc. but will try and work on something to bring to the meeting, noting that it will only be the BIA board members that the AAC will be presenting to, not the actual business owners. Lori asked that an email be provided on a hand-out to share with those interested.

**3) Outstanding Matters, continued**

6) Barrel Restaurant Access

No updates. Remain on outstanding.

7) Additional Accessible Parking Spaces at the Leisureplex

Sean was unable to attend the meeting but provided the following update: “We have added 4 additional spaces, we now have a number of type A and B along with 2 aisles to the current/future sidewalk at the front of the parking spaces. The spaces have been painted. We are awaiting locates for the install of the sign posts to make them legal. Although I said at the meeting the extension of the sidewalk would likely have to wait, I have contracted to add the additional concrete sooner than later as the contractor was able to quote for install this summer. I'm hopeful that I will be able to share a completed project photo at the July meeting”. Sean also provided a picture, which was shown to the Committee.

**4) Site Plans**

1) 143 Ridge Road North - John Brant School

Keegan provided the site plan for more portables at the fairly new school that is already at a capacity. Keegan advised that there are no requirements to make the portables barrier free if the school is as they would just move classes around to accommodate students. Adam noted that at Lakeshore Highschool the portables did have ramps. No other comments were provided.

2) 1640 Garrison – GFESS

Keegan provided the site plan for three more portables that will be added to the existing block of portables that are barrier free. The new stand-alone portables will not be barrier free. No other comments were provided.

3) 625 Garrison road - self storage facility

Keegan provided the site plan for a proposed sub-storage facility. It was noted that there is one accessible space shown on the plan inside the fenced area. It is uncertain what the space will be for, staff or tenants, and Keegan will confirm the use. The Committee asked that an additional accessible “A” type space be included outside of the gated area. Keegan advised that when he receives the architectural drawings he will look at the offices and washrooms inside the building.

**5) Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2019-2023**

The Town's new web-site is going live tomorrow and should meet the compliance requirements under the AODA. Staff have been working on transitioning information from the old site to the new. Council meetings are now provided through E-Scribe, an accessible program for Council meetings and agendas. Council had its first meeting using E-Scribe this past Monday and there are still a few bugs to be worked out.

**6) Other Matters**

1) Accessibility concerns at Battlefield Park - Ridgeway

Bev advised that, following a recent picnic at the site, an individual sent in a request for an accessible pathway from the parking area to the pavilion and the creation of a slope to access the pavilion. Bev advised that the Planning Department has been working on improvements at the site and the tender is getting ready to go out in July. There will be a new accessible limestone walkway, using limestone within the "Limestone Ridge" in order to preserve and highlight the heritage nature of this National Heritage Site. Bev advised that she also forwarded staff excerpts from the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act - Design of Public Spaces regulation, as it relates to constructing external pathways.

Bev confirmed that the new walkway from the parking lot will be "fine grade less than 4% in slope" and that a person with a mobility device, including a wheelchair, will be able to access the pavilion independently once the work is complete.

2) Parasport Niagara 2023

Marilyn advised that the Education Day (May 31) was well attended and she helped educate students on the use of a paddle erg with a flywheel that is used in dragon boats or canoes. She also demonstrated the para canoe, which can be a kayak or Baha, and is a sit in with a stabilizer and single blade panel. Marilyn advised that the students did try it and it got them engaged. The demonstrations also showed that a select group can be a bigger part of the world. Marilyn did note that the community event was held in the middle of the week and could have been better attended if it was held on a weekend. Bev advised that the Town did sponsor the community event with other Niagara municipalities and she was very impressed by all of the speakers but also was disappointed that there wasn't better attendance. Bev noted that the event was communicated several times through the Town's social media. Marilyn agreed that more marketing could have been done to attract more participants. Bev noted that Jeff Thiessen did an amazing job as moderator of the panels and really brought key points back to the group following each segment.

**6) Other Matters, continued**

3) The Power of Inclusive Mindsets – Rick Hansen Foundation

Bev advised that she participated in the live panel series on June 2, which featured Yvonne Felix, Inclusive Design Artist and Consultant; Taylor Lindsay-Noel, Entrepreneur, Motivational Speaker and Disability Advocate; Jade Pichette, Director of Programs, Pride at Work; and Ryan Straschnitzki, former Humboldt Bronco, Team Alberta para ice hockey member and the founder of Straz Strong Foundation. The event was moderated by Matthew Shaw, Accessibility Content Lead, RHF Accessibility Certification. The recap of the series is attached as Appendix “1” to the minutes and Bev highlighted some of the messaging that impacted her.

**7) Date for Next Meeting**

The next AAC meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, July 25, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in Conference #1 (April meeting rescheduled).

**8) Adjournment**

**Recommendation No. 2:**

Moved by: Gary Kooistra  
Seconded by: Adam McLeod

**THAT: The June 27, 2023 meeting of the Fort Erie Accessibility Advisory Committee does now hereby adjourn at 4:50 p.m.**

**(CARRIED)**

Meeting minutes recorded and prepared by:

Meeting minutes approved by:

Bev Bradnam, DPA, CMM III  
Manager, Strategic Initiatives

Lori Brant  
Chair

## Appendix "1" to June 27, 2023 Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes



## The Power of an Inclusive Mindset – a Recap

[RHF NEWS](#)

BY REBECCA BLISSETT ON JUNE 13, 2023

There's a famous quote that says, "An hour spent in self-reflection is an hour well-invested." The recent Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) panel, The Power of an Inclusive Mindset, perfectly aligned with this idea by encouraging people to examine their thoughts, feelings, and actions around disability and its intersections.

Held online on June 2 as part of RHF's National AccessAbility Week celebrations, the hour-long event brought together panelists of varying abilities and perspectives for a lively discussion about challenging assumptions and uncovering unconscious biases.

Moderated by Matthew Shaw, RHF Accessibility Content Lead, panelists included:

- **Yvonne Felix**, Inclusive Design Artist and Consultant
- **Taylor Lindsey-Noel**, Entrepreneur, Motivational Speaker and Disability Advocate
- **Jade Pichette**, Director of Programs, Pride at Work
- **Ryan Straschnitzki**, Former Humboldt Bronco, Team Alberta para ice hockey player, and Founder of Straz Strong Foundation

The panelists shared valuable insights on cultivating an inclusive mindset. According to the post-event survey, 70% of attendees reported that they came away with a concrete action to implement. These actions included actively ensuring all perspectives are heard during work meetings, creating environments that embrace diverse lived experiences, and refraining from making assumptions about others' needs without first seeking their input. If you missed the event or would like to share it with others, you can access the recording at the end of this story. Here, we compiled our top three takeaways.

## **Takeaway One: Embracing an Inclusive Mindset Means Considering the Needs of Others**

The panelists agreed that an inclusive mindset requires us to step outside of ourselves and consider the needs of those around us. Taylor emphasized the importance of being considerate of everyone, even though this sometimes equates to asking hard questions.



*“Because, sometimes, having those difficult conversations is what fosters an environment that makes it better for the next time,” she added.*

Yvonne added that inclusion is also about learning from others with a focus on community and collaboration within that community: it is essential to approach every interaction with openness, curiosity, and a willingness to learn from different perspectives.

“It’s really about being open and communicative and learning from one another,” said Yvonne. “Inclusion means taking things down to a baseline and just being able to hear someone in the way they need to be heard so you can both move forward and learn. It’s always about learning.”

Jade expanded on the topic, adding that an inclusive mindset requires a deep analysis of our own feelings and behaviours. “I go to this quote by American historian Howard Zinn, ‘You can’t be neutral on a moving train,’” they said.

“That speaks to the fact that our society, as a whole, is discriminatory. It’s ableist. It’s homophobic, it’s transphobic, it’s racist. And the only way we can have an inclusive mindset is by actively changing who we are, and our behaviours, our thoughts, and our feelings.”

## **Takeaway Two: The Importance of Challenging Misconceptions and Stereotypes**

The panelists delved into the misconceptions that people often hold about individuals with disabilities. Jade highlighted the prevalent misconception that people with disabilities make up just a tiny segment of the population when, in fact, 1 in 5 people in

Canada have a disability, with that number expected to increase as our population ages. They added that there's also the harmful tendency to infantilize or glorify people with disabilities; Jade discussed how this duality affects their experiences as an autistic individual who often faces assumptions that they are either incapable or extraordinary.

Ryan, who has been a competitive athlete much of his life, said it's important that people put aside their biases. It's not about accomplishing great things despite having a disability; it's simply about achieving great things as a human being who sets out to do so.

"Being a competitor, obviously, I want to prove people wrong, and competition has driven me to try to reach new heights," said Ryan. "There's often those misconceptions about what a person can and can't do, and I think that anyone can do anything."

*"It just starts with a mindset, and that has been a huge part of my journey since my accident."*

### **Takeaway 3: Mistakes are Part of the Learning Process**

Yvonne highlighted the responsibility and privilege of being a role model within their family, providing support and advocating for inclusivity. "It's such a huge amount of responsibility, and they carry that responsibility as well," they said when it comes to nurturing an inclusive mindset to set an example for their children.

“And it should be a choice to be an advocate,” added Yvonne. “It shouldn’t be something that’s put on the disability community, and I feel like it is, that it’s always put on the community – that you should advocate for everyone. The reality is, in my experience, that you can only advocate for you but passing on that skill set of advocacy is something that everyone needs. . . And I think it’s important to ask yourself why do you want to be an ally before you can ask how you can become an ally.”

Taylor shared her experiences as an entrepreneur and social media influencer, emphasizing that mindset plays a crucial role in furthering the conversation and being honest about one’s journey.

“I am learning as well and will make mistakes along this journey, so give me grace,” she said. “We are all learning to make this world a little bit more accessible and inclusive. That’s what I try to do with my platform, and also remind people that we’re just human at the end of the day and we’re not always going to get it right.”

Ryan added that while lived experience provides insight, the spectrum of disability is vast. “As Taylor said, making mistakes along the way is something that’s going to happen. Obviously, you can’t speak on behalf of someone else or another demographic if you’re not in their shoes. But this is a long journey, and we’re working towards reaching the same goal at some point.”

Jade added that they gained insights into different disabilities through the RHF Accessible Spaces 101 course and that it opened their mind to different experiences.

“I’m actively trying to do that learning outside of my own experience so that I am able to be a better advocate for all disabled folks as a whole. But that is never going to be perfect, and I’m never going to be able to speak for everybody’s experience,” they said. “But I might be able to speak better about how to create an accessible environment and an accessible space.”

They added that it is imperative to prioritize accessibility right from the start, whether it involves designing a space or organizing an event. It should be integrated into the budget, and they stressed that it should not be an afterthought.

Jade left the audience with one last takeaway:

*“Humility. It’s really about being humble and compassionate at the end of the day,” they said.*

“There are things that we don’t know, and we’ve all been indoctrinated by the systems we live under. So, it takes some time and effort to unlearn that.”

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**This recap is a condensed summary, and some quotes have been shortened for space considerations. RHF invites you to watch the full recording of The Power of an Inclusive Mindset:**