



**The Corporation of The Town of Cobourg**  
**Accessibility Advisory Committee**  
**MINUTES**

**January 20, 2021, 10:00 a.m.**  
**Electronic Participation**

Members Present: Jerry Ford  
Susan Caron  
Elizabeth Sheffield  
Kathryn Richards  
Troy Mills

Members Absent: Aaron Burchat

Staff Present: Laurie Wills, Director of Public Works  
Jamie Kramer  
Renee Champagne

Staff Absent: Brent Larmer, Municipal Clerk/Manager of Legislative Services

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Sue Carron called the Meeting to Order at 10:02 A.M.

**1.1 Election of a Chair and Vice-Chair**

Laurie Wills, Director of Public Works joined the meeting at 10:02 am.

Jerry Ford joined the meeting at 10:02 am.

Susan Caron joined the meeting at 10:02 am.

Elizabeth Sheffield joined the meeting at 10:02 am.

Kathryn Richards joined the meeting at 10:02 am.

Troy Mills joined the meeting at 10:02 am.

Jamie Kramer joined the meeting at 10:02 am.

Renee Champagne joined the meeting at 10:02 am.

**Moved by** Kathryn Richards

THAT Sue Carron remain as the Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee for the 2021 year.

**Carried**

**Moved by** Elizabeth Sheffield

THAT Kathy Richards remain as Vice-Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee for the 2021 year.

**Carried**

**2. TRADITIONAL LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**3. APPROVAL/ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

**Moved by** Jerry Ford

THAT the Agenda dated January 20, 2021 be approved as presented.

**Carried**

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

There were no Declarations of Interest Declared by Committee Members.

**5. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

**Moved by** Elizabeth Sheffield

THAT the minutes dated December 16, 2020 be adopted as presented.

**Carried**

**6. DELEGATIONS/PRESENTATIONS**

**7. COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE**

**7.1 Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility regarding Supporting Seniors and People with Disabilities During Provincewide Shutdown**

**8. REPORTS**

**8.1 Laurie Wills, Director of Public Works, and Renee Champagne, Engineering and Public Transit Administrator, regarding the Wheels policy and procedure update.**

- L. Wills: Last policy was in a draft format from 2017 and never went for final approval and we want to make sure that happens this time. There were grey areas in the last policy and want to provide more definitions and information to clarify for the service and what it can do.

**Policy**

Highlight some comparisons and changes:

- A few different headings and additions to the document.
- More detailed introduction to the WHEELS service for what it is and what it is not. Previously didn't have a lot of this preamble but went into more detail and definitions with bullet points to help people understand it is a shared service.
- Noting that this is a public transportation service and not a medical service.
- Not much has changed in the Eligibility, but we further defined the information to make it easier to understand.
- The change for the renewal is three (3) years instead of five (5) years. J. Ford: Why the change? L. Wills: To keep our files up to date, mostly the contact information and address, but also the rider conditions if they have changed. The most serious is being able to ride on their own versus having an attendant. On a case-by-case basis, if nothing has changed in the three (3) years, it will be a phone call to make sure everything is the same for the contact information. J. Ford: How are we communicating this to people? L. Wills: WHEELS will receive the policy and current members will receive an update and new members will have to sign off that they read through the policy. R. Champagne: In the draft policy it was five (5) years, but it was two (2) or three (3) years previously so in practice it is not changing. J. Ford: The problem we have now is asking people to fill out new applications and tie up the doctor's during COVID-19. L. Wills: There are exceptions

to be made, especially during the pandemic.R. Champagne: Those with expiring applications receive them by mail but can still use WHEELS until they can get the application in.

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  - J. Ford: The problem we have now is asking people to fill out new applications and tie up the doctor's during COVID-19.

- L. Wills: There are exceptions to be made, especially during the pandemic.
  - R. Champagne: Those with expiring applications receive them by mail but can still use WHEELS until they can get the application in.
- Appeals is the same as before to have people explain why they believe they should be eligible for the WHEELS service.
- Visitors section has not changed and we still allow non-Cobourg residents to use WHEELS if they are eligible in another city as long as they let us know in advance.
- Hours of Operations is new but were our normal operating hours. They are different now because of COVID-19 but they will be the hours.
- Trying to find out if Routematch can send a notification by email and/or text message to assist persons who may not be able to get phone calls.
  - R. Champagne: Assuming it can be done, the rider will have to provide the information on the application, but we will confirm with Routematch.
  - L. Wills: Can put a preference for how to be contacted.
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    - L. Wills: Can put a preference for how to be contacted.
- Don't feel it is necessary to formalize the cancellation and/or no show.
  - E. Sheffield: Add in cancelling at the last moment if you have a fever/are feeling sick is considerate to those who are also riding since it is a shared service.
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- Further clarifying what Attendants are (Personal, Hand to Hand) versus what a companion is. Capable of providing the rider the care and assistance to the rider beyond what the driver can provide.
  - T. Mills: In regards to the Attendant, what happens if they are both disabled?
  - L. Wills: Another WHEELS rider is not a Personal Attendant, but it would be more of a companion. A PA is regarded to medically assisting the person. A companion would just have to pay the fare.
  - E. Sheffield: If a

couple needed a PA, would they each have to have their own?L. Wills: As long as the PA can attend to both of their needs on the bus, that would be fine.

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- E. Sheffield: If a couple needed a PA, would they each have to have their own?
- L. Wills: As long as the PA can attend to both of their needs on the bus, that would be fine.
- J. Ford: What you're doing is limiting the ability for a disabled person to live by taking away their ability to travel without an attendant because we are taking away the responsibility of the community to provide accessible transit. There is a shortage of Personal Attendants and it is causing the ability for people to not be able to continue living their lives. This is a way of limiting the capacity of people to live in our community and protect the Town from the obligation to provide accessible services. I find it objectionable to limit and takeaway. It is against the law to taking away services that have been provided for many years that may not have been in writing but common law prevails. Having provided those services, whether in writing or not, they are there and now we are eliminating the ability of a driver to do a number of things that are necessary to assist people with disabilities. There are people who are not able to get funding or the ability to have a staff member provide for them and we are boxing people in rather than letting them get out and into life. This is the wrong direction for us to take.E. Sheffield: It's just a draft Jerry and it needs to be considered.L. Wills: I understand the frustration and trying to make that this policy is not much different than what we are already doing. It's outlining that if you have a severe disability and cannot ride by yourself, you need to have someone who can come with you. It's not about not allowing people to ride together or have a friend help out. But we cannot rely on our bus driver to do more than drive the bus and

in extreme cases, the WHEELS bus may not be possible for everyone without a little extra help. Doesn't have to be a medical practitioner, it can be a friend, or spouse, etc. just someone who can provide enough assistance to get on the bus without using the driver. The drivers are subjected to labour laws and we have a responsibility as the Town to mitigate the risk of themselves or the riders getting injured. Either party could be injured during the process. It is clarifying the mandatory support person is for the extreme cases when you cannot ride the bus alone at all.S. Carron: A person who needs a lot of assistance and needs and wants to go out, there is a shortage of PSWs so if they don't have someone to assist them, they are trapped. This may not be an issue for WHEELS but a society issue and something that should come up for the Health Unit to get those people help.E. Sheffield: It's also about housing as well. COVID-19 has shown that PSWs are underpaid and cannot afford to live, especially in Cobourg. Housing is a topic that needs to bring forward. Jerry is saying that WHEELS drivers are not just bus drivers so they may need to change the job description and more training. If more is required of them, and if it is required of Century, then it is required.J. Ford: Provided a personal example.T. Mills: Provided a personal example.L. Wills: We have considered these aspects and based on research of other municipalities but we will get a legal opinion on it. My only dispute is if someone is pushing up a ramp and they cannot and they fall, both parties are going to be injured. The building code and transportation code are not the same for accessibility and our ramps are accessible under the code.T. Mills: I've spoken with all the drivers and only one driver does not want to do this.E. Sheffield: Are you going to in detail advise Council about the issues we have with it or should we provide it ourselves?L. Wills: It should come from your perspective.

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- T. Mills: I've spoken with all the drivers and only one driver does not want to do this.
- E. Sheffield: Are you going to in detail advise Council about the issues we have with it or should we provide it ourselves?
- L. Wills: It should come from your perspective.
- E. Sheffield: I have a question about the Hand to Hand Attendant - if they are not present at disembarking, what would happen? Could that be addressed in the policy?L. Wills: The driver would have to contact dispatch but return them to the original location.



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- E. Sheffield: What about with extra early calls? What if someone gets called to be ready an hour early. They shouldn't be able to call you short notice to move up your pick-up time.  
R. Champagne: That shouldn't happen - if we did have to change for whatever reason, we would call and ask about options.
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- E. Sheffield: Just want to make sure that the timelines for ridership option should be consistent.R. Champagne: It's about booking your timelines in advance and making sure you get to your medical appointments.T. Mills: When you are actually talking to the dispatcher, they are very good about letting you know when the vehicle will arrive. There's generally no changes after that.E. Sheffield: But we need to make sure that it's in the policy if it is happening because we may not have the same people in the future.
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- E. Sheffield: Remove the "odors" part of the section because of someone who is incontent of their bowels. Remove that section because it is unacceptable.
- J. Ford: "Have a clear accessible path to your door before pick-up and drop-off times..." Will the driver walk away once he has dropped me off or will he stay?L. Wills: This is a bus driver and he is not to be helping to remove obstacles on private property or be a PA outside of driving the bus.J. Ford: Safe access to my property is my responsibility and how extensively is that to be interpreted?L. Wills: The drive can get you to and from an accessible pick-up/drop-off location so pressing the

button is acceptable. If the pathway is dangerous for you, then it needs to be cleared.

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- L. Wills: The drive can get you to and from an accessible pick-up/drop-off location so pressing the button is acceptable. If the pathway is dangerous for you, then it needs to be cleared.
- J. Ford: What is the next stage in the draft?L. Wills: It will go to Council for approval but as far as the comments related to sections that are not endorsed, I'll have to talk to the Clerk that needs to go together with it and I will have to justify why we have gone the route we did. Council will decide from there.J. Ford: There are a number of us that would like to respond to specific points and I would like to know when that has to be in by.L. Wills: Won't put this in front of Council until I have seen your comments.S. Carron: Elizabeth, could you please get the minutes from Jamie and present a package to Laurie?E. Sheffield: Yes, I can do that.
  - L. Wills: It will go to Council for approval but as far as the comments related to sections that are not endorsed, I'll have to talk to the Clerk that needs to go together with it and I will have to justify why we have gone the route we did. Council will decide from there.
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  - L. Wills: Won't put this in front of Council until I have seen your comments.
  - S. Carron: Elizabeth, could you please get the minutes from Jamie and present a package to Laurie?
  - E. Sheffield: Yes, I can do that.
- E. Sheffield: Can we please remove the term "profanity" from this because of someone who has something like tourettes because it is not directed at someone but a driver could take offense to it.R. Champagne: We would take it into consideration why someone was using profanity but there are times when riders swear at the drivers.

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- E. Sheffield: Senior/ODSP recipients pay the \$30.00 rate.R.  
Champagne: Council would have to decide on this because we would need paperwork and it would be a budget item.L. Wills: We are considering a change in fares anyway, but it would have to go to Council.
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### **Application**

- Not a lot different from the previous one, just outlining more information and providing a summary of the policy even though you are required to read the policy.
- E. Sheffield: Saying the driver is only driving but in the application you are asking very personal, medical questions if there is no expectation of the driver.L. Wills: This is to see how eligible you are because there has to be a reason that you are not using the conventional.E. Sheffield: Why all this eligibility requirement? If the drivers are only drivers, why can't anyone just use WHEELS. A medical requirement based on this service so shouldn't that come with the driver can do more?L. Wills: It is about being able to ride the bus in general, not about the driver or extra offerings on the WHEELS service. WHEELS is for those who cannot get to the fixed route service.E. Sheffield: Should run this by the legal department but we should be going above and beyond.L. Wills: I would agree but there is a risk component that we are tettering on.
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- E. Sheffield: Should run this by the legal department but we should be going above and beyond.
- L. Wills: I would agree but there is a risk component that we are tettering on.

## **9. NEW BUSINESS**

### **9.1 Discussion at large around Accessible Taxis.**

Jerry Ford provides more information about the letter and information that he provided to the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

- Concerned that we are not equipped as a Town for our emergency services if someone gets stranded in a wheelchair.
- Who can be called if someone is stuck and/or stranded?
- Why don't we have some method of accessible emergency equipment? We don't have to spend too much money on this but have someone who is available to pick people up. It costs everyone extra money if someone has to spend an extra night at a hospital or in another area.
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- Used to be that WHEELS was available on an emergency number to pick people up but the person was not answering their phone.
- We cannot rely on WHEELS for an emergency.
- E. Sheffield: What has been done for this?
- L. Wills: There is not a municipal transit solution for this.
- E. Sheffield: We should pose the question to our Emergency Planner at the Town of Cobourg.
- K. Richards: What about after the emergency? Who will take someone home after? Can we not retain Community Care vans at night?
- E. Sheffield: Ask about who to discuss emergency planning to.

## **Accessible Taxis**

- J. Ford: Time to pay attention to the reality and that is we are not going to have accessible taxis because of the economics of it.
- S. Carron: If we cannot have accessible taxis, let's make WHEELS work just a little bit better.
- E. Sheffield: Isn't the the role of Town to make sure that everyone can be part of the world.
- K. Richards: What are other municipalities doing?
- J. Kramer: I will look into other municipalities and what they are doing.
- T. Mills: What about purchasing a modified vehicle after someone has died? Could we not purchase a vehicle that has already been modified.
- E. Sheffield: I suggested a partnership with group homes that have accessible vans to make things happen. For those emergency uses, we should have more options.
- J. Ford: The insurance is prohibitive. The ownership and operating of it is not the problem, but it is the insurance costs. If the Town paid the insurance, it would make a difference for someone to take the initiative to buy a van and provide a taxi service.
- K. Richards: We could potentially ask the Town to subsidize the insurance.
- J. Ford: Accessible taxis have always been subsidized in other communities.

## **10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

- Special Meeting to discuss the comments on the draft policy to take place in the future at 11:00 a.m.

Adjournment at 11:38 a.m.

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Municipal Clerk B. Larmer

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Mayor J. Henderson

