

Accessibility Advisory Committee engagement feedback summary and motion

April 18, 2023 meeting: Staff presented the year's engagement plan to Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) members.

Staff circulated a survey with agenda materials. Two (2) questions were asked of AAC members:

1. Are there additional alternative voting methods that should be included as part of the research stage of this project?
2. Are there additional accessible voting service enhancements that should be included as part of the research stage of this project?

Four (4) responses were received from the fifteen (15) members. The responses were:

1. "None that I can think of." (for both questions)
2. Is it possible to look into latex-free envelopes, or at least sticker envelopes? Lick and stick envelopes contain latex and there isn't a way to seal them on your own if you are allergic. It is possible to peel off a sticker backing and seal the envelope without touching the adhesive, the same cannot be said of the lick and stick envelopes. (no response on the second question)
3. Was left blank.
4. Was left blank.

Staff shared the community stakeholders that were intended to be engaged with and the comparator municipalities.

There was a request to include People First Ontario, Disability Justice Network of Ontario, Indigenous Ability Canada, Kerry's Place, ADHD and Spectrum Center and T2ACOI in the community stakeholder engagement. Staff were unable to find contact information for People First Ontario, so they were not engaged. Staff decided that Indigenous Ability Canada, located in British Columbia, was too far removed from the Guelph area; however, another First Nations Organization (who asked not to be named) located in Ontario was engaged. Disability Justice Network of Ontario, Kerry's Place, ADHD and Spectrum Center were emailed on three (3) separate occasions, but no replies were received. Staff were able to make contact and engage with T2ACOI, and their feedback was incorporated into the decision-making of staff.

August 15, 2023 meeting: Staff presented decision-making criteria as noted in the staff report to council and results from municipal comparators as noted in Attachment-2. They requested feedback on decision-making criteria either at the time of the meeting or through email following the meeting.

No emails were received from AAC members.

A motion was passed at the meeting to add the following criteria:

1. Does not offering the voting method, disenfranchise people? to the City Clerk's Office regarding the decision making criteria to evaluate the voting methods and enhancements.

October 3, 2023 workshop: Prior to the meeting, the staff liaison circulated emails to confirm which date would be best for members of the AAC to participate in this workshop run by a third-party facilitator. The members of the AAC chose October 3. On the day of the workshop, quorum could not be obtained, and the workshop was cancelled.

November 14, 2023 workshop: The workshop was able to be rescheduled after the October cancellation. Staff organized this third-party facilitated workshop to help staff and the AAC work towards a recommendation of voting methods and enhancements that could be presented to Council. Staff requested that the AAC take the information received from this workshop and all other engagement points from the year 2023 and to provide staff with a recommendation at the December meeting.

December 19, 2023 meeting: Staff did not present to the AAC, but were present to receive the recommendation. The AAC provided the following recommendation:

1. In order to accommodate independent voting for all residents of Guelph, the AAC recommends that the city offer Online/Internet Voting, Remote Accessible Vote by Mail, Vote by Phone, Vote by Mail, and door-to-door vote from home options for upcoming municipal elections. The AAC feels that leaving any of these options out will leave some disabled voters without access to a confidential and independent way to mark their ballot. Providing all options will help the city meet their duty to accommodate those individuals under the Ontario Human Rights Code. Furthermore, the AAC would like to highlight the importance of specifically RAVBM and Internet voting as the most universally accessible options, which would solve significant service gaps that have been present in the past two elections for many disabled individuals who have not had access to independent voting.
2. Regarding the facilitated accessible voting discussion held on November 14th, 2023 the AAC requests the city disregard the point form notes provided entirely and only use the meeting recording verbatim to reflect the opinions of the AAC on accessible voting.

February 20, 2024 meeting: Staff intended to present the staff recommendations on alternative voting methods to members of the AAC and engage in a discussion. Unfortunately and given competing items on the AAC agenda, the members determined there was not enough time for staff to present and for the members of

the committee to discuss. The presentation was deferred to the April 16, 2024 meeting.

April 16, 2024 meeting: Staff presented the proposed staff motion to the members of the AAC. This motion will be presented to Council at the May 7, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting. Members of the AAC provided an additional recommendation:

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 Chair Root present their opinions on accessible voting options to council at the May 7, 2024 council meeting.