

# Advisory Committee of Council Staff Report



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To Accessibility Advisory Committee  
Date Tuesday, December 10, 2024  
Subject **October 17, 2024 Accessibility Advisory Committee Resolution Follow-up**

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## Recommendation

1. That the October 17, 2024 Accessibility Advisory Committee Resolution Follow-up report, dated December 10, 2024, be received.
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## Executive Summary

### Purpose of Report

This report addresses resolutions passed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on October 17th, 2024, and aims to foster a collaborative dialogue moving forward. The full content of those resolutions, and related staff responses, is included in the body of this report.

### Key Findings

City staff are dedicated to maintaining clear and open communication with the AAC, ensuring that the AAC's valuable advice is acknowledged and considered by City Council and City staff. As part of the ongoing Redesigning ACOCs Governance Review, City staff will review orientation and training materials for all ACOCs and collaborate with departmental staff to develop content-specific orientations. Staff value the AAC's feedback on these materials and will consider it prior to bringing the revised orientation materials back to the AAC for further input.

The AAC's requested changes to ACOC policies on meeting scheduling and the member appointment process will be shared with City Council for consideration as part of the 2025 Governance Review in March 2025.

### Strategic Plan Alignment

This report supports the Lead with Accountability objective of the City's Strategic Plan by reviewing the effectiveness of City Council and ACOC processes.

### Future Guelph Theme

Foundations

### Future Guelph Objectives

Foundations: Lead with accountability

### Financial Implications

None.

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## Report

On October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024 the AAC approved five resolutions under item 3.1 '[AAC Processes – Public Space Use Bylaw Example](#)'. Those four resolutions are included below, followed by staff responses for each.

1. The AAC requests that staff review the engagement process to add measures that ensure that when completion of promised engagement is not possible, staff will communicate that to the AAC as soon as it is known, and that staff be available to answer questions about the situation at a subsequent AAC meeting.

In the event that completion of promised engagement is not possible, the AAC requests that staff make efforts to contact AAC members via email or alternate means to provide opportunity for alternate forms of engagement.

City staff are committed to fostering an environment of honesty and transparency in our communications with the AAC. This includes communication between staff and AAC members as well as City Council. [Commitment 6 of the Council approved ACOC Governance Framework](#) says 'ACOC members must know how and when their advice has been received by City Council. At the same time, City Council must clearly understand what ACOCs think about the issues and decisions they are considering.'

Although the City regularly consults the AAC on topics beyond the prescribed legislative requirements, City Council, when considering topics on which the advice of the AAC is not legislatively required, retains the right to make decisions without consultation.

As a commitment to clear communication is already included in City policy, staff do not recommend that any further action be taken but remain committed to communicating openly and honestly with the AAC.

2. In order to address a current gap, the AAC wishes to be involved in reworking the AAC orientation documents and manual to include information that reflect the roles, responsibilities, and rights of members as laid out by the province and not just the city. This information should include the AAC's right to have final say over our own agenda and meeting content even when staff disagree, as well as information about city mandates not being allowed to guide members in contravention of provincial mandates. This will ensure that AAC members can be as effective as possible.

Orientation materials for all ACOCs are being redeveloped as part of the on-going Redesigning ACOCs Governance Review. Those materials will include descriptions of the statutory role of ACOCs (where applicable) as well as the non-statutory components established in City policy. Typically, the statutory components of ACOC mandates include specific topics and items which must appear before an ACOC while City policies establish administrative processes, such as who can approve agendas or schedule meetings.

City staff will review orientation materials with this advice from the AAC in mind and we look forward to bringing those revised materials back to the AAC for feedback to ensure they meet the needs of members while remaining aligned with relevant policies, legislation and the ACOC Governance Framework. This work will

be completed following City Council's approval of the Redesigning ACOCs project in March 2025.

3. The AAC requests that the city change the process of scheduling AAC meetings to include authority and approval of the AAC in those decisions. Since contents of meetings and agendas fall under the authority of the AAC through the chair, having decisions about cancelling and rescheduling meetings fall under the authority of the city provides opportunities for unnecessary conflict if staff do not approve of the contents of a meeting agenda.

The [ACOC Meeting Procedures](#), as approved by City Council, give City staff the authority to cancel or reschedule meetings. The role of staff in scheduling meetings is important because ACOCs do not have the authority to direct City staff. As an example, if an ACOC was to schedule a meeting without staff approval, it would constitute direction to staff to support and attend that meeting at a specific date and time, with or without consideration for staff availability or the time needed to draft meeting materials (reports, presentations, agendas, minutes, etc.) and provide public notice. The role of ACOCs is to provide advice to City Council and City staff and the authority to schedule meetings would extend beyond that role.

ACOCs do, however, have a significant role to play when it comes to scheduling and calling meetings. It is the responsibility of the ACOC to set an annual meeting schedule, in practice for the AAC this has been the implicit approval of the existing meeting schedule and frequency, and any changes to that annual meeting schedule require consultation with the chair. Staff will never use the ability to schedule or reschedule meetings to change previously scheduled meetings in bad faith or in any way that prevents the AAC from exercising its statutory or discretionary duties.

For greater clarity, here are some common situations where City staff would exercise authority to cancel a meeting:

- An agenda has not been published in accordance with the required public notice timelines
- Quorum of the ACOC is not available
- City Clerk's Office staff are not available

When exercising this authority, City staff will always work closely with the chair and ACOC members.

City staff will carefully consider the AACs resolution and provide a recommendation to City Council as part of the 2025 Governance Review. The 2025 Governance Review is scheduled to go to City Council in March 2025.

4. The Accessibility Advisory Committee requests that Council revisit the processes through which Accessibility Advisory Committee members are appointed to include transparency for and involvement of Accessibility Advisory Committee members in the decision. Accessibility Advisory Committee members would like to have the opportunity to make recommendations to Council about the membership the same way staff do, and to be made aware of the recommendations of staff. This would protect members' abilities to do our work unrestricted by fear of repercussions in the event of disagreement from staff and will also ensure that membership best reflects the diversity of the disabled community.

City staff will carefully consider the AACs resolution and provide a recommendation to City Council as part of the 2025 Governance Review. The 2025 Governance Review is scheduled to go to City Council in March 2025.

City staff appreciate the AACs dedication, and we look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts to enhance accessibility in our community.

### **Financial Implications**

None.

### **Consultations**

None.

### **Attachments**

None.

### **Departmental Approval**

Jodie Sales, General Manager, Strategic Initiatives and Intergovernmental Services

### **Report Author**

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### **This report was approved by:**

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