



Date: Wednesday, February 08, 2023

From: Carly Craig, Acting Clerk

Subject: 2022 Annual Accessibility Update

Analysis

The Township's [2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#) includes the 4 standard areas contained within the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR): customer service, information and communications, employment, and design of public spaces. 2023 is the last year for which the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan ("the Plan") remains in effect. Council will be asked to approve a 2024-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan prior to the end of 2023.

As we commence the final year of the plan, below is a status update on strategies and objectives included in the plan organized by IASR standards area.

Standards Area #1 – Customer Service

Strategy 1 – Update and Improve Existing Accessibility Policies

The Township's Accessible Customer Service Policy was created in 2016 and requires specific updates to include provisions for service animals as outlined in the Plan. These policy updates are scheduled for 2023. A specific service disruption and customer feedback policy is also scheduled for completion in 2023.

The 2022 Township of Georgian Bluffs Election included three methods for voting; telephone, internet and in-person. With the most voting options in the Township's history, the goal of the election was to be fully accessible and reach as many voters as possible. The online voting system delivered by Sytl, adhered to web accessibility requirements and each in-person polling station was equipped with voting kiosks with accessibility enabled iPads in addition to paper voting. Help was available to voters by phone during regular business hours and in-person at polling stations. Every in-person polling station was held at an accessible location. Visual aids (magnifying glasses),

assistance from election officials, or help from a friend or interpreter (who signed oaths in accordance with election legislation) was available or permitted at every polling station in accordance with the [2022 Election Accessibility Plan](#).

Strategy 2 – Improve Availability of Accessible Documents

While the scope of the plan was limited to investigating options to make certain document formats accessible (PDF, Building Plans), the 2024-2028 plan will include this work as the market now exists for document accessibility software. In 2022, the Clerk's Department researched and was in contact with document accessibility providers and will include budget asks in upcoming budgets to achieve document accessibility as much as possible. The Corporate Services Department has made significant advancements in digitizing records in 2022 to support this work.

Strategy 2 – Update Training to Reflect Policy and Service Standards

Newly onboarded staff receive accessible customer service training via HR Downloads and this work is continuous. This is an area that should be expanded upon and will carry forward to the new plan as an area for continual development (ie. training for new staff on making documents accessible and hands on in-person workshops).

Standards Area #2 - Information and Communications

Strategy 1 – Improve Accessibility to Council and Committee Agendas, Minutes and Meetings

The Township continues to utilize its agenda management software, eSCRIBE (implemented in 2019). Agendas and minutes continue to include "this document can be made available in other accessible formats or with communications supports as soon as practicable and upon request". eSCRIBE publishes agendas and minutes in accessible formats such as HTML. Less accessible report attachments (such as site plans) will be investigated with work under Strategy 1 where documents may be made more accessible with software aid.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Council met virtually, or in a hybrid manner to ensure business continuity while gathering restrictions were in place. Council meetings were livestreamed to ensure that members of the public could observe meetings or could register to participate in the meeting, through Microsoft Teams as a delegation or public registrant. While these restrictions are no longer in place, Council meetings continue to be hosted in a hybrid format and livestreamed for the convenience of constituents and to ensure our meetings are accessible to those without transportation and those without an internet connection. This practice remains in place and will continue for the foreseeable future as spoken to in the Township's Procedure By-law and Electronic Participation Policy.

Enhancements to the audio-visual system in Council Chambers have been made since 2019 to accommodate the hybrid meeting structure and livestreaming. Further upgrades to Council Chambers will be included in the 2024 draft budget to continue this work and will further improve accessibility.

Strategy 2 – Improve Mechanisms for Customer Feedback and Notice of Service Disruption

The Township communicates any service disruptions through all communication channels including social media, website, email, newsprint, and telephone where possible. In 2022 the Township implemented an additional communication tool for customer feedback and inquiries. The web-based form provides an additional channel to provide information, in addition to the feedback form. The tool, “ContactGB”, also has communication mechanisms within it to communicate service disruptions which will be developed further in 2023.

Improvements have also been made in 2022 to the Township’s Accessibility webpage, including an updated feedback form in an accessible word format, as well as the introduction of an embedded web form on the page.

Strategy 3 – Update Township Website to Conform with WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 Level AA

The Township’s website has undergone several updates since the adoption of the plan. Monitoring and improvement of the website is continuous. In 2022, a Communications Specialist joined the Corporate Services Department and therefore additional resources have been dedicated to the website for advancement.

Strategy 4 – Review Emergency Management Plan

Council adopted an updated Emergency Management Plan in 2022. The Emergency Plan is available on the Township’s website. Accessibility of emergency management documents will be ensured, part of ongoing work in Standards Area 1 - Customer Service.

Standards Area #3 – Employment

Strategy 1 – Review and Update Required Policies

The Township regularly reviews personnel policies associated with accommodations during recruitment processes, accommodations for employees with disabilities, return to work, and performance management. This work is ongoing and staff will continue to review and update policies as required.

Standards Area #3 – Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment)

Strategy 1 – Recreation & Trails Master Plan

The [Recreation and Trails Master Plan](#) was successfully completed by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants Ltd. in 2020. Much of the plan is centered around accessibility and includes accessibility forward goals, including:

- Improving the accessibility of both the Kemble and Kilsyth Community Centres
- Improvements for the accessibility of trails (ie. allow for safe two-way travel)
- Improved accessibility of parks and facilities (ie. barrier free washrooms)
- Increased accessibility training for parks and trails staff and volunteers

Strategy 2 – Implement Full Accessibility for Sarawak Family Park

In 2021, the design concept for an accessible pathway at Sarawak Family Park was reviewed by the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee. The project scope will be expanded to include an accessible pathway in the community of Derby to improve access from the Community Centre to the park and will be tendered in 2023.

Other enhancements to improve accessibility at Sarawak Family Park beach are underway.

Accessible upgrades to the seasonal washroom facility at Sarawak Family Park were completed in 2020. Upgrades included:

- Layouts altered for accessibility in both men's and women's washrooms
- Addition of a fully accessible, universal barrier-free washroom (including a change table)
- All doors converted to automatic openers
- Conversion of lights to LED
- Introduction of automatic door locking schedule over night to prevent vandalism





Note: The Township of Georgian Bluffs does not offer transportation services and therefore the standard area is not included in the Plan.

Grey County Joint Accessibility Committee

The Township of Georgian Bluffs is a member of the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Committee's goal is to identify, prevent, and remove barriers from municipal services, by-laws, policies, programs, and facilities. As per legislated

requirements, the committee is comprised of 50% plus one (1) persons with disabilities, political representatives, staff, and interested members of the public. The Clerk attends as a staff representative for the Committee.

Strategic Priorities

The Township will strive to be a leader in municipal and customer service excellence. We will continue to offer remarkable service to those we serve. This includes goal 5.2 to create more accessible meetings to encourage citizen engagement.

The Township of Georgian Bluffs is committed to building community through investment in recreation and community centres, and flexible use of community centres and playgrounds.

Respectfully Submitted:

Carly Craig, Acting Clerk

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	LEG2023-03 - 2022 Annual Accessibility Update.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Feb 2, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Cynthia Fletcher, Chief Administrative Officer