



## THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

### OFFICE OF THE CAO

***Mission Statement:*** As stewards of the Town of Amherstburg, we strive to improve the quality of life of all residents through the delivery of effective, efficient, and affordable services.

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|---|--------------------------------|
| Author's Name: Kevin Fox  | Report Date: May 27, 2024      |
| Author's Phone: 519 736 0012 ext. 2272  | Date to Council: June 25, 2024 |
| Author's E-mail: <a href="mailto:kfox@amherstburg.ca">kfox@amherstburg.ca</a> | Resolution #:                  |

**To: Mayor and Members of Town Council**

**Subject: Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee Achievements in 2023 and Objectives for 2024**

#### **1. RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that:

1. The report entitled Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee achievements in 2023 and objectives for 2024 **BE RECEIVED for information**;
2. An unbudgeted expense of \$1,650 (excluding HST) **BE APPROVED** for the inclusion of an additional concurrent user license for the Equidox Accessibility Software intended for document remediation to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Accessibility with Ontarians with Disabilities requirements under the Information and Communication Standards of O. Reg. 191/11; and,
3. The cost associated with the inclusion of an additional concurrent user to be added to the Equidox Accessibility Software **BE AUTHORIZED** to be funded from the AODA Compliance Reserve Fund (0105) in 2024;
4. The cost associated with the additional concurrent user **BE APPROVED** to be added to the Computer Maintenance expenses in subsequent years.

#### **2. BACKGROUND:**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) provides that municipalities must establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee. As per the AODA and the Committee's current approved Terms of Reference, the Committee shall advise Council on specific matters. These matters include:

- Advise Council of the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards and the preparation of accessibility reports;

- Review in a timely manner the site plans and drawings described in Section 41 of the Planning Act;
- Preparation, implementation and monitoring of effectiveness of the Town's annual Accessibility Plan;
- Review and comment on the accessibility of buildings, parks and other Town facilities;
- Identify, research and collaborate on Town accessibility initiatives as they relate to new and existing Municipal by-laws; and;
- Identify research and collaborate on the Town accessibility initiatives as they relate to purchasing goods and services for the Town and goods and services provided by the Town or agents providing services under contract with the Town.

### **3. DISCUSSION:**

In 2023, the Town of Amherstburg conducted another year of public consultation as part of its commitment to engage with the community and persons with disabilities on the Town's Multi-year Accessibility Plan and its goals. Building on the successes of previous years, the Town continued to showcase its achievement of the objectives set in both the Inclusive Community Plan and the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

For example, the Town has entered into contracted service for the provision of transit services with Transit Windsor, providing a relatively low-cost alternative to other transportation means to get into Lasalle, Windsor or even Leamington, based upon the service areas of Transit Windsor. Additionally, also in the Transportation Standards section of the Multi-Year Plan and in alignment with O.Reg. 191/11 of the AODA, the Town has created a Pilot Project for the provision of Accessible Taxi Services. This program seeks to incentivize private industry to provide this service, based upon the identified proportion of on-demand accessible taxicab services highlighted by the community through public consultation, by means of a grant for services rendered in the year prior.

The Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee met and reviewed numerous site plans and provided recommendations, as well as pairs of members attending Town facilities to provide recommendations on areas of improvement. Work continues to compile this list and identify short, mid and long term goals associated with the recommendations of the Accessibility Advisory Committee for Council's consideration.

In 2023, the Town of Amherstburg continued to review, update and revise its online presence to include the required elements of the Information and Communication Standard. While the web content the Town provides does meet the requirements of the Information and Communication Standard in nearly every instance that has been reviewed, the Provincial reporting tool requires a strict adherence and the requirement that should a single instance of non-compliance be found, that the Town must report as non-compliant with the regulation. Out of an abundance of caution, the Town entered into a Ministry Work Plan to identify the works it planned to take on in order to review and update all elements, and in 2024 received funds necessary for a complete redesign of the Town's website to deal with legacy content that may be removed from the site but continue to be found through indexing tools or other such means. The Town has indicated that it will be fully compliant by the end of 2024 with the required standards in light of this

contribution and the removal of the legacy content, and work continues to provide for this updated website publicly later this year.

This work has utilized the Town's Equidox Software to remediate all newly created content to be provided publicly and training has been provided in a de-centralized manner to all areas to ensure that any area has the required tools to create accessible content.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee provided recommendations on the improvement of the sidewalk on Victoria Street that are expected to be undertaken. Additionally, a recommendation to improve the south side of Richmond Street sidewalks through the removal of several trees in the right of way and the lifting and re-setting of the historic brick sidewalks was discussed in 2023 and will be effected in 2024.

Continuing the work that was commenced in 2021 to annually survey the Town with regards to accessibility, a copy of the 2023 survey results from that consultation is included for informational purposes. The feedback and results can be used (and has been used) to target recommendations for improvements to subject areas to reduce or eliminate barriers and to provide a more inclusive community.

#### **4. RISK ANALYSIS:**

There are no risks inherent with receiving the report on annual achievements towards accessibility in this report for informational purposes.

The inclusion of an additional user to the Equidox Software will ensure that the Town can continue to remediate newly created and legacy content that it provides to the public in accordance with the Information and Communication Standards of O.Reg. 191/11 of the AODA.

Without an additional user license for the Equidox Software, there will continue to be more demand for the software than there are available concurrent user licenses and delays in providing reports and publicly accessible information may have additional impacts on business operations. Such effects may include failure to meet timelines associated with other pieces of legislation, such as the Planning Act, which may have financial impacts, such as the return of deposits or other such consequences.

As the Town has committed to meeting this standard, there are also reputational risks in addition to the identified operational risks above.

There is Strategic Risk inherent in not proceeding to secure an additional user for the Equidox Software in that it may be more difficult to ensure compliance with the Information and Communication Standard of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). As this is identified as "Pillar 1 – Deliver Trusted and Accountable Local Government" within the statement, "Ensure Amherstburg is an inclusive accessible and welcoming community committed to reconciliation," failure to achieve in this area could have a direct impact on the identified strategic priorities of Council.

## **5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:**

The inclusion of an additional concurrent user on the Town's Equidox Software was anticipated in the original contract language, although the decision to not apply the cost provided until later in the life of the contract was intended to offset the associated cost until such a need was established based upon the ramp up time of training and software onboarding. The 2024 cost for an additional concurrent user license is \$3,230 plus HST, prorated for this year to \$1,650.

Now that the additional bandwidth is available across the organization, with decentralized skills provided to each area, the demand for the use of this software has now arrived. With all areas routinely utilizing the software, the need for an additional user license is acute, especially during periods ahead of public agenda creation and other such deadlines. The cost to add the additional concurrent user would be based on a pro-rated amount of the annual cost, and would continue, through the remainder of the term of the contract.

It should be noted that access to this software has offset the need to seek such services through external vendors for many of the Town's related activities, as such, costs have been avoided that may have otherwise been borne. While the Town maintains access to external vendors for instances where the remediation activities are too complex or cannot be addressed with available resources, such activities have been avoided for major activities through internal training and access to remediation software, such as Equidox, internally. For example, in completing this years Operating and Capital Budget, estimates for works to be completed by external vendors ranged as high as \$7,000 to remediate both documents. In processing these requests internally, the Town bore some expense related to overtime to complete the work within the required schedule, but avoided bearing the main costs related to the works by using existing staff compliments. The Town also includes provisions in its procurement contracts that identify and require vendors to prepare documents for public viewing in an accessible manner, thereby cutting down on the requirements to tackle such activities by our own staff.

The proposal to increase the number of available users who can concurrently work within the software increases the number of remediation personnel who can be assigned to a particular task from two to three, thereby increasing the speed with which remediation activities can be completed.

## **6. CONSULTATIONS:**

Valerie Critchley, Chief Administrative Officer  
Melissa Osborne, Deputy CAO/Director of Development Services  
Tracy Prince, Chief Financial Officer/Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer  
Eric Chamberlain, Manager of Roads and Fleet  
Karly Kennedy, Policy and Committee Coordinator

**7. CORPORATE STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:**

*Vision: Preserving our past while forging our future.*

| <i>Amherstburg Community Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026</i>   |  |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PILLAR 1</b><br/><b>Deliver Trusted &amp; Accountable Local Government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Improve trust between council and staff, and residents, by strengthening governance and internal accountability structures.</li> <li>✓ Deliver transparent and efficient financial management.</li> <li>✓ Increase effective communication and engagement with residents.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop our staff team, resources, and workplace culture.</li> <li>✓ Continue to deliver strong core municipal services.</li> <li>✓ Ensure Amherstburg is an inclusive accessible and welcoming community committed to reconciliation.</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PILLAR 3</b><br/><b>Encourage Local Economic Prosperity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Encourage development of commercial and industrial lands.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to promote local tourism industry, especially overnight accommodation.</li> <li>✓ Continue to facilitate downtown development for residents and visitors.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to leverage partnership opportunities with other provincial, federal, and local governments, agencies, and organizations.</li> </ul>               |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PILLAR 2</b><br/><b>Invest in Community Amenities and Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Maintain safe, reliable and accessible municipal infrastructure and facilities.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Increase access to recreation opportunities for all ages.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Finalize and execute plans for town-owned lands (e.g. Duffy’s site, Belle Vue)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create public access to water and waterfront</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize opportunities to reduce environmental impacts of Town operations and increase Town resilience to climate change.</li> </ul>            | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PILLAR 4</b><br/><b>Shape Growth Aligned with Local Identity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Define and communicate a vision for the Town’s future and identity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Promote and plan for green and “climate change ready” development.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review and implement policies that promote greater access to diverse housing.</li> <li>✓ Protect the Town’s historic sites and heritage.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Preserve the Town’s greenspaces, agricultural lands, and natural environment.</li> </ul> |

**8. CONCLUSION:**

The achievements and objectives of the Accessibility Advisory Committee in 2023 and continuing into 2024, showcase continuous improvement and a commitment to making the Town a more inclusive and welcoming community. This report seeks funding commitments in 2024 and consideration in 2025, for improvements designed to target and reduce or remove barriers to accessibility.



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Kevin Fox  
**Municipal Clerk / Risk Manager**

## Report Approval Details

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|----------------------|--|
| Document Title:      | Amherstburg Accessibility Advisory Committee Achievements in 2023 and Objectives for 2024.docx |
| Attachments:         | - 2024 06 14 - 2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan RM.pdf                                       |
| Final Approval Date: | Jun 14, 2024   |

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



Tracy Prince



Valerie Critchley



Kevin Fox