



ACTION

Accessibility Advisory Committee Minutes

**Wednesday, February 13, 2013
5:00 p.m.**

Kenora Recreation Centre Meeting Room

PRESENT: Denise Miault, Chair
Ruth Bowiec
Deanne Sutton
Diane Pelletier
Ken Puckall
John Nabb
Sharon Smith, Council
Heather Lajeunesse, Administrative Assistant
Suzanne Broten (left at 5:45 p.m.)
Tom Snyder (left at 5:45 p.m.)

REGRETS: Bayley Kurtz-Ostenfeldt

Denise Miault called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

A. Introductions & Welcome:

Suzanne Broten, Executive Director and Tom Snyder, Property Manager both of Direct Management Services Inc. were guests at the meeting. Direct Management Services Inc. manages the social housing units for the Kenora Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corporation. They were invited to the meeting to possibly provide some answers to some of the questions that Committee members are frequently asked by the public and are unable to answer.

B. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest & the General Nature Thereof:

1) On Today's Agenda

2) From a Meeting at which a Member was not in Attendance

There were none declared.

C. Confirmation of Minutes:

Moved by D. Pelletier, Seconded by K. Puckall & Carried:-

That the Minutes of the last meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee December 12, 2012 be confirmed as written and filed.

D. Items:

1. Inquiries for Direct Management Services

Denise explained how she had originally asked at a Committee meeting what the City's responsibility is regarding accessible housing in Kenora. This led to a series of inquiries and eventually the suggestion of inviting the Chairman of the Kenora Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corporation to a meeting to seek further answers so that the Committee can provide them for those who inquire.

Suzanne gave an overview of the topic, indicating that the matter is huge, complex in region, and diversified on how it is rolled out, adding that the system is difficult to navigate for someone who doesn't know where to start. She stated that there were several accessible housing units built in Kenora just over ten years ago and nothing has really happened since then with regards to building more accessible housing in Kenora or with upgrades to the existing units. She indicated that they manage 206 housing units locally and that there are currently four organizations that manage the various social housing units in Kenora. The housing is centrally controlled by Kenora District Services Board (KDSB) many inquiries are directed there as they control the access, intake application process, eligibility and waiting lists. Suzanne stated that more recently sub-waiting list have been allowed in Kenora for Henesy Terrace and for the seniors housing complexes (not including the Parkview Apartments). This service is to address the need for seniors to be able to age in their own place through supportive housing. The response has been significant and tenants pay a nominal fee for the service. It was mentioned that there are dual programs offered for these residences, that property management is through a company and services within are offered by other agencies.

Councillor Smith asked if Henesy Terrace is the only accessible housing within Kenora. Suzanne indicated that this depends as there is a lot of seniors places that are supportive but that Henesy is the best most accessible housing (eg. for wheelchair users) in the area right now. She added that the building needs upgrading that that more accessible washrooms are priority right now. Bathrooms and doorways are the biggest issue for wheelchair users and converting is expensive as there has been no funding available as of yet from the government. Accessibility needs have changed over time since the units were first built (bigger wheelchairs, etc.) Any new building that is built must be accessible but there has been nothing new built in Kenora for some time now. There are lots challenges with accessible housing and not a lot of funding.

Denise stated that she receives lots of inquiries about the funding for housing and asked if there is a provincial formula for the funding. It was confirmed that the funding is complex, there is a formula but it is not simple to answer. There is grant money available to build new accessible units but these funds are not easily accessed. Organizations can get grant money to build new units but there no additional money offered to operate them and rental amounts are set so cannot be increased to cover these costs. As well there are many criteria to meet in order to be eligible. Suzanne assured that Kenora Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corporation is continually looking to see if they can afford to build more units but it is never feasible and that they are working to maintain what they have with the budget they have.

Councillor Smith inquired if there are grants available for upgrades to existing units. Suzanne stated that they are always on the lookout for any funding and that when funding is offered the window of opportunity is usually fairly small so

they must be prepared in advance. She gave an example of a situation where the Corporation thought they were eligible for funding for upgrades but after researching further it turned out they were not eligible as the funding was for upgrades in public spaces and not private residences. Suzanne added that Ministry of Health generally receives more government funding as compared to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. She shared some positive news with the committee stating that due to the need and growing demand the Corporation has recently approved finishing of the the upgrades to all the washrooms at Henesy Terrace. The upgrade work will be completed as tenants move out of the units as it is too disruptive to do while people are residing in them. The discussion touched briefly on lack of repairable dollars for upkeep of these units.

Denise inquired as to what the municipality's obligation to social housing. It was confirmed that municipalities fund the KDSB, and then the KDSB flows the funding back into the community. The province has recently asked for more involvement from municipalities in determining where the funding should be allocated to be DSABs and the City is currently working on defining what the needs are in Kenora.

There was an inquiry as to whether or not someone from out of province can call and be put on a list for Kenora housing. It was confirmed that they can as the only criteria to be eligible is that they must be Canadian citizen with no rent arrears, applicants cannot be turned down for any other reason. It was mentioned that the turnover rate at Henesy Terrace is low, that the waiting list does not move along very quickly which is hard to explain to people who are on the list. It was suggested by the committee to review the accessible housing inventory for Kenora as perhaps there are people that are in accessible units who don't require them and can possibly be moved to different locations to accommodate those with accessibility needs. Suzanne suggested asking KDSB for the number of units and if they do not have current numbers they can ask their property managers for current information in case modifications have taken place to some units. Suzanne confirmed that Direct Management Services does look into moving people to accommodate those that require more accessible units and suggested that other property managers might do this as well.

There was an inquiry as to whether or not other communities have accessible housing that we are unaware of. It was suggested to direct this inquiry to the KDSB as they control and fund the housing so they should be able to answer the question.

It was agreed that the federal government is backing off with support for social housing and things are getting even tighter. It was suggested that private sectors programs need to be brought back. As well the AODA is requiring further mandated changes by municipalities but they aren't putting any money out to assist with the costs.

Suzanne and Tom were thanked for attending the meeting and departed at 5:45 p.m.

2. Business Arising

There was no business arising from the previous minutes.

3. Old Business

John Nabb suggested the committee contact Ray Pearson at KDSB for further information on accessible housing. Ray is the Capital and Maintenance Manager for Kenora and will be able to provide local area data. John further added that there are never funds available for operational costs. Social services are constantly being downloaded to municipalities without the funds to match therefore taxpayers now bear the burden of these social programs. Some costs have been uploaded once again but then funding is removed from other areas, it was agreed that it is a poor system.

Ruth thanked Councillor Smith for the information regarding contacts that was provided to her for the Retired Railroaders to look into funding for a wheelchair ramp at their museum.

4. Terms of Reference

Councillor Smith asked that the Terms of Reference be added as an agenda item for discussion as there had not been an orientation for the new committee members. It was mentioned that Kenora's Accessibility Plan needs to be updated, particularly in light of the new AODA requirements. The Committee needs to be focusing on a Terms of Reference. Much has changed since the Plan and original Terms of Reference was created therefore it should be discussed where this Committee is going. Councillor Smith indicated that she spoke with City CAO Karen Brown regarding this and was informed that the City will hiring a Property & Planning Manager and the Committee will be added to this manager's file once the position is filled. Council will then have to determine the Terms of Reference for the committee. The Committee members will be involved but it should be Council driven as it is a mandatory committee of Council. It was agreed the City's Accessibility Plan is considerably outdated and that changes should be made annually as per the Act. Councillor Smith believes the City staff should re-write the plan with input from the committee members. It was agreed that the Terms of Reference should be driven by the City's goals. The AODA is now driving this so it is not going to just be an option anymore, it must be done. It was also agreed that the committee structure needs to be reviewed as the current proposed structure is not realistic, too many members are required and the committee has never had a full slate of representatives since it was formed. It was agreed that the Committee will wait until the new manager position is in place and the terms of reference are set prior to moving forward. It was suggested that in the meantime the Committee can come up with its own goals and ideas and bring them forward to Council. Councillor Smith asked that the minutes from the meeting be forwarded to Karen Brown for information.

5. Updates & Information

Diane Pelletier mentioned that the Lake of the Woods Hospital Accessibility Committee would like to partner with another committee to do something for accessibility week in June. Diane is on that committee as well.

Diane further mentioned that the LOWDH Accessibility Committee receives many accessibility complaints about the Paterson Medical Clinic and is wondering if there is anything the City's Accessibility Advisory can do. It was confirmed that the building is not municipal, that it is a private building and any complaints can go to the Paterson Medical Centre Board. It was mentioned that the new part of the building is accessible but the old part is not. There are several issues concerning doorways, rooms, as well as examining tables/beds.

H Lajeunesse

Denise announced that Kenora is hosting the Northern Ontario Wheelchair Curling Championships February 22-24 and encouraged members to come out to watch and support the teams.

6. New Business

No new business was discussed.

7. Next Meeting Date

- Wednesday, March 13th at 5:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.