MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council
FROM: Mayor Miro Weinberger
DATE: August 23, 2017
RE: Accessibility Committee

This memo outlines proposed changes to the Accessibility Committee to clarify its focus and authority, and is intended to alert the Council about new Mayoral appointments to the newly organized Accessibility Working Group.

Background

The Accessibility Committee was created by the City Council in 2012 for the purpose of assisting and advising the Mayor, City Council, and City departments on ways to increase opportunities for people with disabilities and meet the needs of people with disabilities by encouraging full and equal participation in all aspects of life. This includes the identification and removal of architectural, procedural, programmatic, attitudinal, and communication barriers, and strong advocacy for policies, programs and services that meet the needs of people with disabilities.

In partnership with the Mayor’s Office, the Accessibility Committee authored a plan in March 2013 that recommended the Committee focus on public and private infrastructure, housing, school events, and private business to improve accommodation and accessibility, as well as to raise awareness. A City Council resolution in May of 2013 made suggestions for who the Mayor’s representatives should be and charged Human Resources and the City Attorney’s office to work with the Committee to develop a training program and report back to the Council regarding the training of City employees on accessibility issues and the annual training of elected and appointed officials (Councilors, School Board members, board & commission members) on accessibility issues. More recently, the City and in particular the Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront Department has focused on infrastructure improvements and park accessibility, including for example new crosswalks and an ADA-accessible path at Schmanska Park, restroom renovations in Oakledge Park, the automatic doors and drinking fountain at the Miller Center, and the incorporation of universal access elements into the design of a new playspace at Oakledge.

Reorganization

In recent years, the Committee has worked to identify a specific focus to drive its efforts. Without a clear mission, it has remained unclear which Departments should staff the meeting, and what specific projects or initiatives Committee members should address. To remedy both challenges, the Marketplace Department contracted with a consultant on the advice of VCIL to help clarify the Committee’s goals in 2016.
Pursuant to the consultant’s recommendations, the City has determined that the best structure for the Accessibility Committee would be as a working group focused specifically on ensuring accessibility in the downtown as the City works on multiple projects in this and the coming construction seasons. The Marketplace Department will take the lead on managing the committee’s monthly meetings and get support from the Department of Public Works and Parks, Recreation & Waterfront and Clerk/Treasurer’s Office on an as needed basis.

The Accessibility Working Group will continue to assist and advise the Mayor, the City Council and City departments on ways to increase opportunities for people with disabilities and meet the needs of people with disabilities by encouraging full and equal participation in all aspects of life. This includes the identification and removal of architectural, procedural, programmatic, attitudinal and communication barriers, and strong advocacy for policies, programs and services that meet the needs of people with disabilities.

The City of Burlington employees who are continuing to serve are as follows:

- Martha Keenan, Department of Public Works
- Emma Allen, Burlington Parks, Recreation and Waterfront
- Darlene Bakyo, Clerk/Treasurer’s Office
- Ron Redmond, Marketplace Department

The new members of the public the Mayor is appointing to the Accessibility Working Group are:

- Nate Besio
- Gabriel Brunelle
- Ned Church
- Dave Clark

The Working Group will continue to hold meetings, bringing a range of stakeholders together to address accessibility needs in our downtown, report findings and make recommendations to the relevant City Departments.

Thank you.