

**Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee of
Lincoln, West Lincoln, Pelham, Thorold, Niagara-on-the-Lake,
Grimsby and Port Colborne
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 14, 2024
Zoom and In-Person Meeting**

6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Present: Rhys Evans (Pelham), Dan Whipple (Pelham), Rebecca Hill (Lincoln), Joey Hewitt (Thorold), Jennifer Thiessen (Lincoln), Dianne Rintjema (Lincoln), Janice Desroches (Thorold), Lisa Peso (Grimsby), Donna Herrington (staff support).

Regrets: Dave Antaya (NOTL), Lauren Bubnic (NOTL), Jennifer Korstanje (Grimsby), Laura Slade (Port Colborne).

Guests: Councillor Wayne Olsen (Pelham), Mayor Marvin Junkin (Pelham), Justin Letourneau (Tech Support, Thorold).

Donna introduced Councillor Wayne Olsen and Mayor Marvin Junkin from the Town of Pelham and welcomed them to the meeting.

1. **Call to order.** As Dan was attending via phone, Donna called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

2. **Approval of the Agenda**

Be it resolved that the agenda is approved as presented. Moved by Joey Hewitt, seconded by Jennifer Thiessen. CARRIED.

3. **Approval of the Minutes of January 11, 2024**

Be it resolved that the minutes are approved as presented. Moved by Rebecca Hill, seconded by Joey Hewitt. CARRIED.

Business Arising from the Minutes:

4. **Niagara Falls – New Hospital Design – Jennifer, Dave, Joey**

The group from the JAAC who attended the public consultation was very impressed with the design proposed. Several accessibility needs are addressed in the design, and it goes beyond wheelchair accessibility. For example, Joey mentioned that at three entrances there are dog relief areas for service animals. Donna mentioned the floor inserts for wayfinding for people with low vision and visual disabilities. The group was also pleased that the hospital has established an advisory committee to look at physical plant issues and that will include accessibility. Dan has applied to be on this committee and will bring news and information back to the JAAC.

5. Accessibility Award – next steps –

The design of the award decal has been chosen by the group. We are waiting to hear from the City of Welland regarding their decision to join the JAAC before proceeding with the awards program/process and printing of the award decals. We should have an answer by April 2024.

6. Town of Lincoln AODA and Funding for small businesses resolution – Dianne

The resolution is being circulated to other municipalities at this time.

New Business:

7. Virtual Reality Disability Experience – Jennifer, Lauren, Donna

This is a training resource developed by Brock University professor Maureen Connelly, Niagara College, and a virtual reality company. Although focused on the educational sector, the scenarios used are applicable to multiple situations. There is also a 2D version that can be accessed. Jennifer will send out the links to this version to the JAAC. We will continue to support Maureen as she develops this tool further in the future.

8. Niagara Region Accessibility Plan Update – Dan

Dan was very displeased with the public consultation he attended at Meridian Centre in Pelham. He feels it was not well organized or well timed. Also, there is too much focus on the web-based approach to gathering feedback and this reduces the opportunity for people with disabilities to participate. He will raise his concerns at the next Regional AAC meeting. Donna suggested that the JAAC invite the Accessibility Advisor for the Region, Tammy Dumas, to a future meeting. This was agreed to by the group.

9. JAAC member updates – Donna

Donna asked the group if they felt it would be helpful to ask the JAAC Administration Group to come present to the JAAC their accessibility achievements. The group felt there should be some parameters on the presentation:

- To present accessibility achievements or progress accomplished in the last 12 months.
- How they intend to work towards the 2025 legislative deadline; outlining what they have yet to do.

Donna will reach out to the Admin Group and ask them to attend our next meeting of May 9, 2024, and take 10 minutes to outline their efforts. The next meeting will be dedicated to these updates.

10. Community News

Rebecca – is doing a presentation at her son’s daycare about accessibility to a group of 3–4-year-olds. She has found some resources but asked the group to share their suggestions. Both Janice and Rhys provided some suggestions, and the group wished her the best of luck.

Rhys – is concerned about the affordability of cab fare for people with disabilities who rely on this service to get between municipalities. Councillor Wayne Olsen serves on the Niagara Transit Commission and says the Commission has a goal of providing a \$6/fare for anywhere in the Region. Both Councillor Olsen and Mayor Junkin are committed to accessibility and will continue to champion the needs of those with accessibility issues.

Dan suggested that he and Rhys meet with Councillor Olsen in Pelham to discuss this issue. Dan and Rhys will arrange this.

Dan and Donna thanked our guests for attending and we thanked Justin for his technical support.

11. **Next Meeting – Thursday, May 9, 2024, from 6:30-8:30 pm.** Location: Four Points Sheraton, Thorold ON. Format to be hybrid (in person/Zoom).

12. **Adjournment.** Motion to adjourn at 7:35 p.m. made by Rhys Evans.