

TOWN OF AMHERST
Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Advisory Committee
Minutes

Date: May 28, 2025
Time: 4:30 pm
Location: Council Chambers, Town Hall

Members Present Councillor Kathy Wells, Chair
Deputy Mayor Hal Davidson, Vice Chair
Jim Prendergast, Citizen Representative
LJ Barquilla, Citizen Representative
Tammy Gero, Citizen Representative
Vanessa Jones, Citizen Representative
Victoria Vance, Citizen Representative

Members Regrets Clifford Pinchbeck, Citizen Representative

Members Absent Marina Godfrey, Citizen Representative

Staff Present Mallory Klooster, Community Well-Being Manager
Natalie LeBlanc, Municipal Clerk
Cindy Brown, Administrative Assistant

1. Call to Order

The Clerk called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

1.1 Introductions

The Clerk introduced the Town of Amherst staff, members of Council and the members of the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee that were in attendance.

1.2 Territorial Acknowledgement

The Clerk gave the Territorial Acknowledgement.

1.3 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Clerk asked for nominations for the position of Chair. Deputy Mayor Davidson nominated Councillor Wells for Chair. There being no further nominations, Councillor Wells accepted the Chair position. The Clerk then asked for nominations for the position of Vice Chair. Victoria Vance nominated Deputy Mayor Davidson. There being no further nominations, Deputy Mayor Davidson accepted the Vice Chair position.

1.4 Approval of Agenda

Moved By Victoria Vance

Seconded By LJ Barquilla

That the agenda of the May 28, 2025 Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee meeting be approved as circulated.

Motion Carried

2. Discussion Items

2.1 Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee (AIDE) Strategic Plan

Mallory Klooster discussed the Strategic Plan and asked the Committee for any feedback and suggestions.

LJ Barquilla said that there is a need for genderless washrooms in town-owned buildings and facilities, and encouraged businesses to do the same.

Vanessa Jones asked if any staff has received the Rick Hansen training (RHFA Professional Training). Natalie LeBlanc answered that there was a staff member who received it but he is no longer with the Town. Vanessa suggested maybe another staff or committee member could take the training.

Vanessa Jones discussed the scooter safety training that will be held at the stadium on June 11, 2025 at 10:00 AM., and asked if there will be any community engagement at this event to receive feedback on accessibility issues in the town that needs corrections/adjustments to aide with their mobility. She further suggested that the wording for "senior" scooter safety should be changed as not everyone who uses a scooter is a senior, and that perhaps the term used should be powered mobility instead of scooter.

Deputy Mayor Davidson asked what training should staff receive. He would like some feedback to Council as to what training staff need and when targets will be met as to when they will receive that training. LJ Barquilla asked if committee members can attend these training sessions as well. Councillor Wells suggested that staff look into this however there could be costs to that. LJ suggested perhaps local businesses could be invited to attend as well to cut costs.

Deputy Mayor Davidson suggested that the Strategic Plan should be shared with all of Town staff.

Jim Prendergast asked if the Province has a list of suggested/required courses since this committee is mandated by the Province. Vanessa Jones said that the Rick Hansen Training is on the list of suggested courses.

2.2 Territorial Acknowledgement

Mallory Klooster advised that during the Council's Strategic Priorities Workshop, one of Council's 'points to capture' was to obtain a legal opinion about the current wording of the Town's Territorial Acknowledgement.

Deputy Mayor Davidson stated that he feels it is not necessary to obtain a legal opinion on the word "unceded" as most other municipalities use the same word in their Territorial Acknowledgements. Deputy Mayor Davidson thought that the term Indigenous Blacks could be updated to 'people of African decent'.

Moved By Deputy Mayor Davidson

Seconded By Tammy Gero

That the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee recommend that Council amend the Territorial Acknowledgement Policy to update the Territorial Acknowledgement to remove the words Indigenous Blacks and replace it with People of African Decent.

Motion Withdrawn

Moved By Deputy Mayor Davidson

Seconded By LJ Barquilla

That the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity Committee recommend that Council amend the Territorial Acknowledgement Policy to update the Territorial Acknowledgement to read:

“I would like to acknowledge that our gathering today is taking place in (MEEG-MA-GEE), the traditional, unceded and ancestral territory of the Mi’kmaw people. I would also like to acknowledge that Nova Scotia has another unique people, the people of African decent whose legacy and contributions date back over 400 years predating confederation of this land. We are all treaty people.”

Motion Carried

2.3 Legion Request to Name Green Space

Mallory Klooster reported that the Amherst Legion has submitted a request to name the green space beside Town Hall to reflect a Mi’kmaw saying for 'Healing Place'.

Moved By Victoria Vance

Seconded By Tammy Gero

That the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee recommend Council direct staff to consult with local indigenous communities to investigate an appropriate word or phrase in Mi’kma’ki for Healing Place.

Motion Carried

3. Next Meeting Date

Mallory Klooster indicated that the Canadian National Institute for the Blind is looking for volunteers. If any committee member would like to volunteer, or knows someone who would, please contact Mallory.

The next meeting was scheduled for September 17, 2025 at 4:30 PM.

4. Adjournment

There being no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting.

Natalie LeBlanc
Municipal Clerk

Councillor Kathy Wells
Chair