

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

Date: November 12, 2025
Time: 4:30 pm
Location: Council Chambers, Town Hall

Members Present Councillor Kathy Wells, Chair
Councillor Hal Davidson, Vice Chair
Ava Tooley, Youth Town Council Representative
Jim Prendergast, Citizen Representative
LJ Barquilla, Citizen Representative
Marina Godfrey, Citizen Representative
Vanessa Jones, Citizen Representative
Victoria Vance, Citizen Representative

Members Absent Clifford Pinchbeck, Citizen Representative
Tammy Gero, Citizen Representative

Staff Present Aaron Bourgeois, Director of Operations
Mallory Klooster, Community Well-Being Manager
Marc Buske, Building Official
Sean Payne, Marketing & Communications Officer
Natalie LeBlanc, Municipal Clerk
Cindy Brown, Administrative Assistant

1. Call to Order

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

1.1 Territorial Acknowledgement

The Chair gave the Territorial Acknowledgement.

The Chair welcomed Amherst Youth Town Council representative Ava Tooley and the Town of Amherst Building Official Marc Buske to the Committee.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

Moved By Councillor Davidson

Seconded By Jim Prendergast

That the agenda be approved as circulated.

Motion Carried

1.3 Acceptance of Minutes - September 17, 2025

The Chair called for any errors or omissions in the minutes. There being none, the minutes of the September 17, 2025, meeting of the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee were accepted as included in the agenda package.

2. Hailie Tattrie Presentation

Hailie Tattrie presented her update on her research project she is doing through MITACS (Mathematics of Information Technology and Complex Systems) for the study on youth resiliency in Cumberland County. Hailie said she is hoping her report will be complete by March 2026 and that she is also writing a book on this subject and that could be submitted to publishers as early as April 2026. She indicated that the top concerns for youth were identified as transportation, a need for a third space, poverty and homelessness, lack of funding and training for youth workers, and drugs, adding that the youth also indicated they would not want to raise a family here.

Councillor Davidson asked for clarification on the research participants, Hailie explained how she had interviews with youth providers, three one on one interviews with youths and a sharing circle with twelve to fifteen youths from across Cumberland.

Victoria Vance asked about the diversity of the research participants. Hailie answered there was quite a few LGBTQ+ participants, and she did get a few participants of colour.

Marina Godfrey asked if there were any participants with disabilities. Hailie answered she did not notice any participants with physical disabilities but there were some with learning disabilities and some with mental health issues. Marina found this disappointing and would like to engage youth with physical disabilities.

3. Discussion Items

3.1 Annual Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Report - Klooster

Mallory Klooster presented the Annual Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (AIDE) Report. Mallory reviewed the objectives and goals for Accessibility and Equity and Anti-Racism and the accomplishments.

Councillor Wells advised that during the NSFM Fall Conference MLA Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin organized a meeting with the Mayor Small, Mayor Gilroy and representatives with the NS Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to discuss the construction of a sidewalk from Canadian Tire to the Cumberland Regional Hospital. Councillor Wells said that she also spoke with CAO Jason MacDonald about writing a letter from the Committee to several departments in the provincial government to help expedite this.

LJ Barquilla asked if the Town requires pedestrians to wear reflective or bright clothing while walking out at night to make them more visible. Mallory Klooster answered that the Town of Amherst cannot dictate what people wear but the Community Living staff is working on sidewalk safety videos and that can be mentioned as public awareness. LJ suggested perhaps the Town could distribute reflective tape or stickers as a potential solution.

Marina Godfrey said that motorized scooter users should have some safety education. Councillor Wells answered that the Amherst Police Department along with the RCMP recently held a Scooter Safety Session and no one attended. Ava Tooley added that police do go into the schools to present to students on scooter safety.

Vanessa Jones asked if it will be Marc Buske performing the Accessibility Standard Audits, with his Rick Hansen training. Mallory Klooster said it would be a collaborative staff effort, but that Mark Buske will be included as part of it. Marc Buske said that Rick Hansen is a business, and often their evaluation sheets do

not line up with Nova Scotia Building Regulations. Marc Buske said as a building official he looks at the sidewalk all the way into the building, this includes new construction and renovations.

Vanessa Jones asked if an audit report will be brought back to this Committee. Mallory Klooster answered yes that it can be, or it can be integrated in the annual Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (AIDE) Report.

Councillor Davidson said that according to the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (AIDE) Strategic Plan that there is supposed to be assessments done with findings reported back to Council.

Councillor Davidson asked if the annual report has been submitted to the province yet. Councillor Wells said not yet we need a motion to send it to council for next week. Mallory Klooster said that the province does not require for the annual report be submitted to them, this is just a report to be submitted to council.

Councillor Davidson said that the under Accomplishments section, the U17 hockey game should be removed as it was not accessible, most of the wheelchair areas were blocked off by equipment and Halloween decorations, and that neither the seniors' room nor the portable ramp was available. Mallory Klooster said that she will remove that from the report before it is presented to Committee of the Whole.

Victoria Vance asked if accessible parking will be included as part of the audit. Victoria said the handicap parking spot at the intersection of Church Street and Victoria Street is a real concern. Marc Buske said it depends on the mandate from the Committee. Councillor Davidson added that anyone trying to get out of an accessible van in the accessible parking lots behind Town Hall would not be able to do so if cars were parked beside them.

LJ Barquilla asked if anything has been done about making restrooms at Town facilities more inclusive for all genders. Mallory Klooster answered that nothing has been done yet.

Councillor Davidson suggested that perhaps a strategic plan update be a standing agenda item for future meetings.

Moved By LJ Barquilla

Seconded By Victoria Vance

That the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee recommend that Council request staff to investigate the feasibility of having inclusive for all gender restrooms at all Town of Amherst facilities.

Motion Carried

Moved By Vanessa Jones

Seconded By Councillor Davidson

That the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee recommend Council request staff to complete an audit of all Town of Amherst facilities and infrastructures, including accessible parking spaces,

to ensure they are fully accessible as it is laid out in the Council approved Strategic Plan and to bring a report back to this Committee for review.

Motion Carried

Moved By Marina Godfrey

Seconded By LJ Barquilla

That the Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee recommend that the Annual Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Report with amendments be forwarded to the Committee of the Whole.

Motion Carried

3.2 YReach Newcomer Event - Klooster

Mallory Klooster presented her memo on the YReach Snack and Survey Social that was intended to engage with new residents. The event included a survey for new residents to share what brought them to Amherst and what supports they would like to see in order for them to stay in the community.

3.3 Anti-Hate Call Application - Klooster

Mallory Klooster presented her memo regarding the Anti-Hate Call for Proposals application. If the application is successful, there will be funding to hire a full time 2-year term employee to lead the collaborative project with community partners.

Councillor Wells asked when the Town will know if this application is successful. Mallory Klooster answered that they are hoping to hear early in 2026.

3.4 Green Space Update - Klooster

Mallory Klooster presented her memo on naming of the Green Space next to Town Hall. Councillor Davidson asked who is being consulted. Mallory Klooster answered that staff is currently working with Indigenous Affairs about the naming the green space.

4. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date was scheduled for February 11, 2026, at 4:30 PM.

5. Adjournment

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

Natalie LeBlanc
Municipal Clerk

Councillor Kathy Wells
Chair