THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF WASAGA BEACH

POLICY MANUAL

SECTION NAME: ADMINISTRATION	**POLICY NUMBER:** 2-12
POLICY: Integrated Accessibility Standards- Planning Accessible Meetings & Events	**REVIEW DATE:** November 2022
EFFECTIVE DATE: March 26, 2019	**REVISIONS**: March 2019
ADOPTED BY BY-LAW NO: By-Law No. 2019-23	**ADMINISTERED BY:** Clerk's Department

PURPOSE

The Town of Wasaga Beach (Town) is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility of facilities, goods and services, including accessibility to meetings and events hosted by the Town of Wasaga Beach, to persons with disabilities.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

The Town of Wasaga Beach is committed to increasing and enhancing accessibility to its programs, goods, services, and facilities. Commitments from Council, Town staff and the Accessibility Advisory Committee are leading the Town towards ensuring its programs, goods, services and infrastructure is accessible to all residents and visitors, regardless of ability. The goal is to incorporate accessibility as a part of everyday life and maintain it as a core element to Town services. The development and implementation of the Accessibility Plan advances and strengthens the Town's commitment to make Wasaga Beach a more accessible community.

The Town of Wasaga Beach, both as an employer and service provider, is committed to barrier free access and will:

1. Take a leadership role in achieving and setting an example to the business, institutional and volunteer sectors in terms of access and integration, employment equity, communications, recreation, transportation, housing, design of public spaces and education.
2. Identify barriers and gaps in existing programs, facilities and services.
3. Continually improve the level of accessibility of municipal facilities, goods, programs and services.

4. Actively encourage input from all segments of the community in the design, development and operation of new and renovated municipal facilities and services.
5. Ensure the provision of quality services to all members of the community with disabilities.
6. Provide resources and support to give effect to the Accessibility Plan.
7. Promote accessibility within the community.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005 ("AODA") was passed with the purpose of developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for all persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodations, employment, buildings structures and premises.

Ontario Regulation 191/11 entitled "Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation" ("IASR") came into force in July 2011. Part II of the IASR establishes accessibility standards specific to information and communications for public sector organizations that provide goods and services to members of the public or third parties.

This policy is legislated under the IASR, which requires broader public sector organizations, including municipalities, to develop and implement policies, procedures, and best practices governing how they will meet the requirements set out within the Regulation.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all public meetings and events hosted by the Town and its Boards and Committees, including Council, Standing Committees, and Advisory Committees, Ad Hoc, and Informational Meetings or events hosted and/or sponsored by the Town of Wasaga Beach.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy:

"Accessible" – Capable of being entered or reached, approachable; easy to get at; capable of being influenced; obtainable; easy to understand or appreciate.

"Assistive Listening Systems": An assistive listening system receives a feed from the audio system found in lecture halls or meeting or conference rooms. This communication support makes it easier for people who are hard of hearing to hear and understand speech even from a distance. For example, a wireless FM system, which consists of a transmitter and receiver, can be used with or without a hearing aid.

"Barrier" means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a

physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communication barrier, and attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

"Communication Support Attendants": Communication support attendants help people with intellectual disabilities access information presented orally at meetings, conferences, and public events.

"Computerized Note Takers": Computerized note taking is a service that can make a meeting or presentation more accessible to people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. It may also be requested by people with visual disabilities because it allows them to refer to the saved electronic notes afterwards using screen reading software. Note takers use a laptop computer with a standard keyboard and an overhead screen or monitor. Computerized note taking is not a verbatim transcript, but summarizes what is spoken while still maintaining accuracy and the spirit and intent of the speaker.

"Disability" means:

- Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, induces diabetes, mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment or physical reliance on a dog guide or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- A learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
- A mental disorder;
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. (Ontario Human Rights Code)*

"Intervenors": Intervenors may guide and interpret for people who are deaf-blind. Intervenors are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling.

"Real-Time Captioning" (Also known as CART): Real-time captioning can make a meeting or presentation accessible to people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing and who may not use sign language. It provides simultaneous (real-time) speech to text translation. A real-time captioner uses a court reporting steno machine, coded to type verbatim text with minimal keystrokes. The steno machine is connected to a laptop containing special software that converts the key strokes and displays the text being spoken for the user to read on an overhead screen or monitor.

"Sign Language Interpreters": A sign language interpreter is necessary whenever communication is required between deaf and (non-signing) hearing people. Interpreters should be available at events, meetings or presentations attended by people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All Departments are responsible for:

- Ensuring that a member of your staff is responsible for making the event accessible.
- Ensuring the Accessible Meeting/Event Checklist is followed, where reasonable, in order to ensure meetings and events are accessible;
- Being trained in the operation of assistive devices provided by the Corporation;
- Ensuring assistive devices to be used at a meeting/event are in good working order.
- Be prepared to respond to accommodation requests in the same manner that you respond to other requests and questions about the event

If you are in doubt about the level of accessibility at a potential venue, it is recommended that you consult with the Clerk's Department, Town's Accessibility Committee or a local disability group who has expertise in barrier-free access and/or meeting/event planning.

PROCEDURE

The Town will ensure that reasonable accommodation is made to ensure that its meetings are accessible so that persons with disabilities are able to fully participate in community life.

Critical areas of consideration to ensure meetings are accessible include:

- access to meeting agendas, information and proceedings; and
- physical access to the meeting/event space.

Advanced planning for accessible meetings/events is necessary to ensure that the accommodation of people with disabilities is anticipated and acted upon ahead of time. Anyone planning a meeting/event shall, where applicable, use the "Accessible Meeting/Event Checklist" attached as Appendix "A".

Staff shall ensure any meeting/event notice is provided in accordance with the Town's Public Notice Policy.

The Accessible Meeting/Event Checklist provides a guideline for accessibility. Staff, Department Heads or others with expertise in barrier-free access and public engagement should be consulted, when required, with respect to planning an accessible meeting/event.

Pre-Event Planning

The key to accessibility is advanced planning. Even when it is unknown whether any participants may require accessibility accommodations, staff should be prepared to

organize the meeting or event so that it is accessible so that people with disabilities can participate.

Prior to the event you may wish to:
- Assign a member of the planning team for making the event accessible
- Ensure that the invitation/registration for the event or notice of meeting includes information about the accessibility of the event and if possible, as for specific accommodation needs (e.g. "Please indicate any additional requirements you may have in order to participate in the meeting or conference").
- When appropriate, provide information about local services such as accessible transportation, emergency veterinarians, and/or wheelchair repair services.
- Prior to confirming the date of your event, determine if other disability-related events are taking place in the area during the same timeframe which may impact on the availability of service providers.
- Where feasible and reasonable, schedule sign language interpreters and/or real-time captioners as soon as possible after confirming the date of the event and the need for this service (s).
- If meals are not provided at the meeting/event, provide information about accessible restaurants in the vicinity.
- Check to determine whether there are visual fire alarms. If not, inquire about the facility's evacuation plan or create your own
- Ensure that the conference website is available in a format that is accessible to people who use screen readers.
- Ensure there is at least one telephone that can be used by a person who is seated.
- Check to see if the customer service areas (i.e., counters, display tables, etc.) are low enough for wheelchair or scooter users to see over.
- Make sure that any additional signs specific to the event are created in large print.

Physical Access to the Meeting Area

When planning your event there are several aspects to the physical environment that should be considered to ensure the meeting/event area is accessible.

Choosing a location

Items to consider when choosing a location include the following:
- Parking
- Entrances
- Washrooms
- Meeting rooms
- Doors
- White noise (background noise that may interfere with hearing)
- Visual fire alarms (for use by persons who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing)
- Telephone access
- Customer service areas
- Recent renovations/current construction

- Availability of auditory equipment
- Sensitivity training of staff
- Relieving area/water bowls for service dogs

Exterior Access

Items to consider when assessing exterior access include:
- Signage
- Parking
- Sidewalks/path of Travel
- Accessible Transit

Interior Access

Items to consider when assessing interior access include:
- Entrances and Lobbies
- Elevators/Lifts
- Accessible Washrooms
- Hallways and Corridors
- Meeting and Conference Rooms
- Making refreshment and dietary arrangements
- Providing adequate signage indicating where meeting is taking place

<u>Access to Meeting Contents and Materials</u>

When planning your event it is important to remember to ensure the content of your event is also accessible.

Invitations and promotional materials

- Invitations and promotional material about your accessible event should contain the International Symbol of Accessibility and other accessibility symbols. (list of symbols attached as Schedule "B")
- Where feasible, invitations should be made available in multiple formats for people or organizations that require or request them (see Town's Information and Communications Policy and Guide to Accessible Information and Communication for format guidelines)
- The invitation and promotional materials should include a note that asks participants to request any additional requirements they may have in order to participate in the meeting or conference.

Accessible Communications

- Oral presentations should be supported with sign language interpreter/real-time captioner, where feasible.
- Print materials should also be made available in alternate formats, such as CD or large print, where feasible.

- Adjust the numbers of multiple format documents you will need according to the anticipated audience. For example, if the anticipated audience consists of seniors, you may consider producing a great number of printed materials in large print.
- Respond to specific customer's requests for preferred alternative formats by making post-event production and delivery arrangements if required.

ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A – Accessible Meeting/Event Checklist for Planning an Accessible Meeting/Event
- Appendix B – International Symbols of Accessibility

POLICY REVIEW AND PROCEDURE

This Policy will be reviewed as required, but in any case no later than five (5) years from the date of the most recent review.

The Town Clerk will be responsible for initiating the review of this Policy.

APPENDIX "A"

ACCESSIBLE MEETING/EVENT CHECKLIST

The following is an accessible meeting checklist to assist you in planning your meeting/event. **This checklist reflects an optimum level of accessibility which may not always be feasible.** Please use accordingly and in relation to the Town of Wasaga Beach Accessible Policies, Information and Communications Policy and Guide to Accessible Information and Communications, to encourage participation by everyone.

PLANNING A MEETING

Pre Planning

☐ Assign responsibility for accessibility planning.
☐ Before confirming the date, find out if other accessibility-related events are taking place in the area during the same time frame. This may have an impact on your event and availability of service providers.
☐ Reception or refreshment area in a location with a clear path of travel. As part of pre-event planning, ask if participants require special accommodations.
☐ Ensure that the invitation or notice of meeting includes information about the accessibility of the event.

Choosing a location

☐ Visual fire alarms for the safety of persons who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing; if not, inquire about the facility's evacuation plan or create your own
☐ Telephone available that is situated low enough for use by a person who uses a wheelchair
☐ Counter service areas low enough for person who use wheelchairs or scooters to see over
☐ Is there any renovation or construction work scheduled during the time of your meeting. This may affect accessibility.
☐ Where feasible, portable FM Listening Systems and/or telephones with auditory adjustments available for persons who have hearing loss
☐ Where feasible, sign language interpreter and/or real time captionist required
☐ TTY service available
☐ Staff trained in disability awareness
☐ Relieving area for service dogs. Water bowls for dogs.

Refreshments and Dietary Arrangements (if required)

☐ Give participants an opportunity to indicate any dietary needs ahead of time (i.e. when registered for the event/meeting)
☐ When beverages are being served, bendable straws and lightweight cups need to be available and within each reach of people using wheelchairs and scooters
☐ Have available sugar-free beverages, juices and water for people with dietary concerns such as diabetes
☐ If food is provided buffet-style, have someone on hand to help serve people with visual and physical disabilities
☐ If pastries and cookies are on the menu, also have fresh fruits and vegetables for people with dietary concerns
☐ Consider the height of tables suitable and/or adjustable for use by all individuals

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Signage

☐ Signs clearly marked and visible from the street for street address and building name
☐ Signage well lit at night (for evening events)
☐ Large letters and plain language used on signs directing people to specific areas
☐ Signs free of glare
☐ Additional signs specific to the event in large print

Parking

☐ Sufficient number of barrier-free designated parking spaces available for estimated number of attendees with disabilities. If not, arrange for more designated parking spaces close to the building during the event.
☐ Accessible metered parking or public parking lots with accessible spaces close by.
☐ Level access or a curb cut from the parking area to the main entrance.
☐ If it is winter, parking areas are clear of snow and ice.

Sidewalk/Path of Travel

☐ Barrier-free path of travel from parking lot or drop off area to meeting entrance. (Path to be free of stairs and obstructions, non-slip, few or no stairs, even level and clear)
☐ If winter, walkways clear of snow and ice.
☐ For safety, sidewalks separated from road and driveway.
☐ Event personnel aware of stair free pathways to the event.
☐ Area suitable for service dogs to relieve themselves and water bowls for dogs.

Accessible Transit

☐ Location serviced by accessible transit services.
☐ Drop off location close to the building entrance and covered (preferred).
☐ If winter, snow and ice removal provided.

INTERIOR ACCESS

Entrances and Lobbies

☐ All entrance doors wide enough for the passage of a person using equipment such as a wheelchair, walker or scooter and guide dog (2' 8 " to 3 feet).
☐ If main entrance is not accessible, are there signs directing people to accessible entrance
☐ Entrances well lit and located centrally.
☐ Doors easy to open (2' 7 ½". to 3 feet) with a lever handle or an automatic door opener.
☐ Large letters and plain language used on signs directing people to specific areas. Signs mounted at approximately 60" from floor for people in wheelchairs or with low vision.
☐ Additional staff may be required at doorways to direct and assist.
☐ Telephones with auditory adjustments and TTY availability.
☐ At least one telephone that can be used by someone seated.
☐ Customer service areas low enough for wheelchair and scooter users to see over and across.

Elevators/Lifts

☐ Elevators/lifts located close to the meeting room and large enough to accommodate the size of equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers and scooters and a guide dog.
☐ Braille buttons and raised numerals, sound and/or light signals to indicate their operation as well as a control panel at an appropriate height for use by all individuals.
☐ Additional signs clearly marked and at a height suitable for all individuals
☐ Elevator controls mounted at comfortable height.
☐ Auditory signals for persons with low vision or who are blind.
☐ Visual cue systems for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Emergency Plans and Procedures

☐ Venue has emergency plan that is available to the public and in accessible formats
☐ Evacuation plan in place that considers the needs of people with disabilities
☐ Visual fire alarms available and working
☐ Venue's staff and your event staff and volunteers are familiar with locations of elevators and accessible fire exits
☐ Event staff designated to assist individuals who may need assistance in an emergency

☐ Designated staff identified by vest, armband, or badge

Washrooms

☐ Accessible washrooms near the meeting location.
☐ Doors equipped with an automatic or push button door opener.
☐ Large enough to accommodate equipment such as wheelchairs and walkers.
☐ At least one accessible stall large enough to accommodate equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers and scooters
☐ Stalls have grab bars and raised toilet seats.
☐ Door signage clearly marked preferably with raised tactile male or female sign or Braille lettering.
☐ At least one accessible sink with handles that are easy to operate using one hand and accessories/dispensers ware within easy reach for all individuals located at an accessible height for all
☐ Event planners know the location of accessible washrooms.

Hallways & Corridors

☐ Wide and clear enough to accommodate the passage of equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers and scooters and guide dogs, to travel to meeting area, washroom facilities, elevators and exits (width of 72" for persons in wheelchairs to pass one another).
☐ Floors smooth and slip resistant, glare free with low pile carpeting, hardwood flooring or tile.
☐ Are interior doors minimum 32" clear width.
☐ Lighting adequate and adjustable for the environment.
☐ Stairs have handrails on both sides.

Meeting Rooms

☐ Large enough to accommodate seating and mobilization for anticipated number of participants who use wheelchairs, scooters, guide dogs, etc.
☐ Easy to navigate and located conveniently on the first floor or easily accessible by elevators
☐ Refreshments and meals provided in a location that is accessible for all individuals.
☐ Refreshments served in containers or on dishware that is lightweight and easy to use.
☐ Is reception or refreshment area in a location with a clear path of travel?
☐ Stage and speaking areas such as podiums, lecterns clear of obstruction and accessible to wheelchair or scooter users; accessible to all individuals both presenting as well as in the audience (physically, visually and audibly).
☐ Check noise levels for distracting noise (ventilation systems, noise from adjacent rooms).
☐ Check meeting room that has drapes/blinds to provide reduction in glare or light form windows.
☐ Room lighting levels adjustable

- ☐ Check that cables, wires, microphones are well secured (no loose cables) and are not blocking path of travel.
- ☐ Portable microphones available, if needed
- ☐ Well-lit space and seating provided for the sign language interpreter/real-time captioners.
- ☐ Accessible seating available throughout.

ACCESS TO MEETING CONTENTS AND MATERIALS

Agenda

- ☐ Written agenda uses minimum 12-point, legible font, such as Arial.
- ☐ Inform participants of accessible conduct such as leaving aisles free and identifying themselves when speaking.
- ☐ Sufficient number and length of breaks allocated so people with disabilities can move easily between sessions.
- ☐ Key points in agenda when people with disabilities might need assistance identified (For Example, if a speaker plans to hold up a photo, a person with low vision might need to be told what the speaker is doing)

Presentations

- ☐ Presenters reminded of role in ensuring an accessible event.
- ☐ Presenters given deadline to provide copies of materials, such as presentations, to be transcribed into accessible formats, if required.

Promotional Materials

- ☐ Promotional materials have the appropriate international symbol(s) of accessibility printed in obvious locations.
- ☐ Materials produced and available in formats that are required (e.g. Braille, large print, CD) based on the needs of the audience.
- ☐ Materials easy to read with colour contracts of black on white, minimum of 14 point size in a simple font choice on non-glossy paper.

Ensure Accessible Communications

- ☐ Provide materials in alternate formats (or the process to request materials) and provide contact information on how to obtain these formats (as per the Towns Information and Communications Policy).
- ☐ If necessary/feasible, arrange for a sign language interpreter for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.
- ☐ If feasible/necessary, arrange for Real-Time Captioning (CART) – uses simultaneous speech to text translation for people who are deaf deafened or hard of hearing.
- ☐ If feasible/necessary, computerized notetakers – use laptop computer with a standard keyboard and overhead screen or monitor.

- ☐ If feasible/necessary, Assistive Listening Systems – receives feed form the audio system found in meeting room.
- ☐ Interveners – may guide people who are deaf-blind.
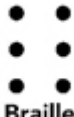- ☐ Communication Support Attendants - help people with disabilities access information.

ADDITIONAL ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

- ☐ Water bowls and suitable relieving area available for service animals
- ☐ Accessible restaurants/cafes identified if food not provided
- ☐ Lodgings with accessible rooms identified

APPENDIX "B"

Universal Symbols of Accessibility

The following symbols, not limited to, can be used to promote and publicize accessibility of places, programs and other activities for people with various disabilities.

	International Symbol of Accessibility (ISA) This is probably the most recognizable symbol of accessibility. The wheelchair symbol should only be used to indicate access for individuals with limited mobility, including wheelchair users. For example, the symbol is used to indicate an accessible entrance, bathroom or that a phone is lowered for wheelchair users.
	Braille Symbol This symbol indicates that printed matter is available in Braille, including exhibition labelling, publications and signage.
Large Print	**Accessible Print** The symbol for large print is 'Large Print' printed in 16-20 point font size. In addition to indicating that large print versions of books, pamphlets, museum guides and theatre programs are available, you may use the symbol on conference or membership forms to indicate that print materials may be provided in large print.
	Assistive Listening Systems This symbol is used to indicate that assistive listening systems are available for the event. The systems may include infrared, loop and FM systems.
	Sign Language Interpretation This symbol indicates that Sign Language Interpretation is provided for a lecture, meeting, performance, conference or other program.
cc	**Closed Captioning (CC)** This symbol indicates that a television program or videotape is closed captioned for deaf or hard of hearing people (and others).