



To: Mayor Evans and Members of Council
From: Sue Walton, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk
Clerk's Department
Report Number: CR-04-23
Meeting Date: 11 Jan 2023
Subject: **Election Accessibility Report**
Our File No: C07-74034

Recommendation

THAT Clerk's Report CR-04-23 regarding Election Accessibility be received as information.

Background/Analysis

The Municipal Elections Act, 1996, requires that the Clerk provide a public report within 90 days after voting day addressing the measures taken to remove and prevent barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities.

The Township's Elections Accessibility Plan (Appendix 1) ensures that election services are accessible to all electors and candidates, identifies and eliminates barriers for persons with disabilities and creates a positive voting experience. The Township continues to learn, develop and adjust its approaches in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. The adopted plan is considered a "living" document and is updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement are recognized.

The Elections Accessibility Plan is provided to each registered candidate and is available on the Township's election webpage during the Election year.

The Township utilized the Vote-by-Mail voting method for the 2022 Municipal Election which allowed electors to vote in the comfort of their home in a convenient and familiar setting. Electors also had the option of completing their ballots at the Township Office at 130 Balm Beach Road West in a secure/private location.

The Township office is accessible and staff were available to aid those who requested assistance. All election staff were trained on the Township's Accessible Customer Service Policy and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Policy.

Designated parking for people with disabilities is available close to the main entrance of the building and the building features an accessible ramp.

Reviewed By Other Departments

Not applicable.

Options/Alternatives

1. To receive the report as information.
2. To provide direction to staff as deemed necessary.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications related to this report.

Relationship to Strategic Plan

- Deliver Exceptional Municipal Services
- Support Community Health, Safety & Well-Being
- Create an Engaged, Informed & Connected Community

Conclusion

Staff will continue to explore opportunities and welcome input to make future municipal elections more accessible for all electors.

Appendices

[Appendix 1 - 2022 Elections Accessibility Plan](#)

Haley Leblond, Director of Finance/Treasurer	Pending
Robert Lamb, Chief Administrative Officer	None



The Corporation of the Township of Tiny

2022 Elections Accessibility Plan



This Plan is for use in the 2022 Municipal Election in conjunction with the Township's current Accessible Customer Services Policy, Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy, training and customer service feedback standards.

Table of Contents

Introduction_____	Page 3
Legislative Requirements_____	Page 3
Voting Method and Voting Location_____	Page 3
Service Animals_____	Page 3
Support Person_____	Page 4
Provision of Election Information_____	Page 4
Staff Training_____	Page 4
Assisting Candidates and Electors with Disabilities_____	Page 4
Notice of Temporary Disruption_____	Page 5
Feedback Process_____	Page 5
Post-Election Report_____	Page 5

Introduction

It is the goal of the Township of Tiny to ensure that electors in the municipality who have a disability or require accommodation are provided with the best opportunity to vote as independently as possible in the 2022 Municipal Election. The Township is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities. The Township strives to provide goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

The focus of this Plan is to ensure that election services are accessible to all electors and candidates, to identify and eliminate barriers for persons with disabilities and to create a positive voting experience. The Township continues to learn, develop and adjust its approaches in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. This plan is a 'living' document and will be updated as best practices are identified and new opportunities for improvement are recognized.

The Township is in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to review the Elections Accessibility Plan to ensure needs are being met.

Legislative Requirements – Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended

In accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended, the Clerk is authorized to establish procedures and provide appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in the 2022 Municipal Elections. Accordingly, the 2022 Municipal Elections will be conducted in such a manner to ensure that:

1. Candidates and electors with disabilities have full and equal access to all election information and services.
2. Persons with disabilities have full access to voting locations; and
3. Persons with disabilities are able to independently and privately mark their ballot and have access to alternative methods of voting assistance.

Voting Method and Voting Location

The Township of Tiny will be utilizing the Vote by Mail voting method for the 2022 Municipal Election which allows electors to vote in the comfort of their home in a convenient and familiar setting. Electors also have the option of completing their ballots at the Township Office at 130 Balm Beach Road West in a secure location. The Township Office is accessible and staff are available to aid those who request assistance. Designated parking for people with disabilities is available close to the entrance and the building features an accessible ramp.

Service Animals

Anyone requiring the use of service animals is permitted to be accompanied by a service animal at the Municipal Office. Service animals may be any animal assisting a person with a disability. Service animals include, but are not limited to guide dogs, hearing alert dogs, seizure alert animals, special skills animals and animals that provide emotional support to persons with disabilities. Person with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their service animal at voting locations (Municipal Office – 130 Balm Beach Road West).

Support Person

A support person may accompany a person with a disability in order to help with communications, mobility, personal care or medical needs. The support person, upon the completion of the prescribed oath, may accompany the elector into the secure area to assist the elector in the voting process.

A support person may be a family member, friend or a trained professional. A support person is permitted to accompany the voter throughout the voting location, including the voting booth. The Township will not prevent the person with a disability from having access to their support person while at the voting location. The support person is able to mark the voter's ballot for the person with a disability if required, however the support person must complete an oath to maintain the secrecy of the vote.

Delegated Election Officials may also assist the voter in marking the ballot if required. The Delegated Election Official would mark the ballot as directed by the voter and place the ballot in the ballot box at the voting location. The Election Official must make note on the voters' list that the ballot was marked by them or by a support person.

Provision of Election Information and Communications

The Township will in accordance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, provide candidates and electors with disabilities with information in a format that takes into account their disability. Once a request has been made, the requester and the Clerk and/or designate will agree upon a format that meets the needs of the individual.

Staff Training

All staff carrying out election duties will be trained to recognize and ensure that persons with disabilities are served in a way that accommodates their needs in accordance with the Township's Accessibility Customer Service Policy. See Appendix A – Understanding the Needs of People with Disabilities and How to Interact Appropriately (extract from the Township's Accessible Customer Service Policy)

Assisting Candidates and Electors with Disabilities

Candidates or electors with disabilities may require assistance to help them access election information and services. Serving our customers with disabilities is about providing service in a manner that reflects the Township's guiding principles of customer service.

The Corporation of the Township of Tiny is committed to providing its goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all people. The Township's Customer Service Policy strives to ensure the following:

- a. The Township's goods and services shall be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- b. The provision of Township's goods and services to persons with disabilities shall be integrated, unless an alternate measure is necessary, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.

- c. Persons with disabilities shall be provided with an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the Township's goods and services.

Accommodation may involve various forms of assistance such as the use of the individual's own mobility aids and assistive devices (i.e. wheelchair, cane, scooter, crutches, etc.) assistive devices that the Township may make available to them (i.e. magnifying glass).

Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

If there is a temporary disruption in the delivery of election information or services, the Clerk shall provide public notice on the Township's website, social media channels, at the physical site of the disruption and when possible in the local media.

The notice shall include:

- the reason for the disruption
- anticipated duration, and
- description of alternative methods of delivering the information or service.

Feedback Process

Feedback about the manner in which election services are provided to persons with disabilities may be submitted to the Clerk's Department in accordance with the Township's Accessible Customer Service Policy.

Feedback may be provided in the following manner:

1. Completing the appropriate form available online and at the Municipal Office (See Appendix B – Elections Accessibility Feedback Form).
2. In person or by mail at the Municipal Office, 130 Balm Beach Road West, Tiny.
3. By telephone: 705-526-4204
4. By TTY Telephone Service: 705-526-4205, Ext. 301
5. By email: swalton@tiny.ca

Post-Election Report

Section 12.1(3) of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, as amended, states the following:

“Within 90 days after voting day in a regular election, the clerk shall prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and shall make the report available to the public.”

The post-election report will be posted to the Township's website and available in an accessible format upon request.

Understanding the Needs of People with Disabilities and How to Interact Appropriately

Types of Disabilities:

Vision

Vision disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Impaired vision can restrict a person's ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision disability. Others may use a guide dog or white cane.

- › Identify yourself when you approach your customer and speak directly to them.
- › Speak normally and clearly.
- › Never touch your customer without asking permission, unless it's an emergency.
- › If you offer assistance, wait until you receive permission.
- › Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- › Do not touch or address service animals.
- › Do not leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
- › Do not walk away without saying good-bye.
- › Be patient.

Hearing

People who have hearing loss may be deaf or hard of hearing. Hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. People who are hearing impaired may require assistive devices when communicating. Some people may use sign language, notes or hearing aids when communicating. They may also use email, pagers, or TTY telephone service.

- › Always ask how you can help. Do not shout.
- › Attract the customer's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.
- › Make sure you are in a well-lighted area where your customer can see your face.
- › Look at and speak directly to your customer. Address your customer, not the interpreter.
- › If necessary ask if another method of communicating would be easier, i.e. a pen and paper.
- › Do not put your hands in front of your face when speaking.
- › Do not touch or address service animals.
- › Any personal matters (i.e. financial) should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing.
- › Be patient.

Deaf-Blind

A person who is deaf-blind cannot see or hear to some extent. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervener. Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.

- › Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have some sight or hearing, while others neither.
- › A customer who is deaf-blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
- › Speak directly to your customer as you normally would, not to the intervener.
- › Identify yourself to the intervener when you approach your customer who is deaf-blind.
- › Do not touch or address service animals.
- › Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission, unless it's an emergency.
- › Be patient.

Physical

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities and not all require a wheelchair. For example, people who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions, or amputations may also have difficulty moving, standing or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

- › Speak normally and directly to your customer. Don't speak to someone who is with them.
- › People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. Ask before you help.
- › Do not touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, unnecessarily unless it's an emergency.
- › Provide your customer information about accessible features of the immediate environment (i.e. automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).
- › Remove obstacles and rearrange furniture to ensure clear passages.
- › Be patient.

Intellectual or Developmental

People with intellectual or development disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one's ability to learn. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way a person acts, asks questions or uses body languages.

- › Do not assume a person can or cannot do something.
- › Use plain language and speak in short sentences.
- › Make sure your customer understands what you have said.
- › If you cannot understand what is being said, do not pretend. Just ask again.
- › Provide one piece of information at a time.
- › Speak directly to your customer, not to their companion or attendant.
- › Be patient and supportive.

Learning

Learning disabilities can result in a host of different communication difficulties for people. They can be subtle, as in having difficulty reading, or more pronounced but they can interfere with a person's ability to receive, express or process information. You may not be able to know that someone has a learning disability unless you are told, or you notice the way a person acts, ask questions or uses body language.

- › When you know that someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can best help.
- › Speak normally, clearly, and directly to your customer.
- › Take some time – people with certain learning disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- › Try to find ways to provide information in a way that works best for them. For example, have a paper and pen handy.
- › If you are dealing with a child, be patient, encouraging and supportive.
- › Be courteous and patient and your customer will let you know how to best provide service in a way that works for them.
- › Patience and willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

Mental Health

People with mental health disabilities look like anyone else. You will not know that a person has a mental health disability unless you have been told.

- › Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- › Be confident and reassuring. Listen carefully and work with your customer to meet their needs.
- › If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.
- › Be patient.

Speech or Language Impairments

Some people have problems communicating. It could be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words, causes slurring or stuttering, or not being able to express oneself or understand written or spoken language. Some people who have severe disabilities may use communicator boards or other assistive devices.

- › Just because a person has one disability does not mean they have another. For example, if a customer has difficulty speaking, do not assume that they have an intellectual or development disability as well.
- › If you do not understand, ask your customer to repeat the information.
- › If you are able, ask questions that can be answered “yes” or “no.”
- › Be patient and polite, and give your customer whatever time he/she needs to get his/her point across.
- › Do not interrupt or finish your customer’s sentences. Wait for them to finish.
- › Patience, respect and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

This information was obtained from the website of the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services – Accessibility Standards.

Accessible Elections Feedback Form

The Corporation of the Township of Tiny is committed to providing its goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all people. In order to ensure that we are meeting your needs, please complete the information below.

Were your needs accommodated in a manner that made your voting experience more accessible?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Were you able to receive the information in an appropriate format?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

What would make voting more accessible for you in the future? (Building accessibility, customer service, assistive devices)

Comments: _____

Additional Comments:



Contact Information (Optional):

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No.: _____

Email: _____

We also provide additional methods of receiving customer feedback including:

In Person or By Mail: Township of Tiny
130 Balm Beach Road West
Tiny, ON L0L 2J0
Attention: Sue Walton, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk

By Telephone: 705-526-4204

By TTY: 705-526-4205, Ext. 301

By Email: swalton@tiny.ca

By Feedback Form: www.tiny.ca