

Subject: Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC) 2024-2026 Proposal

Recommendation:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report # 2024-0160 -Clerks - Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC) – 2024-2026 Proposal;

AND THAT Council approve the 2024-2026 Proposal to coordinate AODA Compliance for 2024-2026 with The Herrington Group Ltd., at a cost of \$10,000 per year;

AND THAT the Town Clerk be directed to prepare the necessary by-law authorizing the Mayor and Clerk to execute the said Agreement for the next Regular Meeting of Council.

Background:

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) was legislated in 2005. The legislation aims to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards across Ontario with a view towards completing full accessibility in the Province by 2025.

This legislation mandates that municipalities with populations of 10,000 or more are to establish and maintain an accessibility advisory committee. The Act also allows two or more municipalities to create a joint committee, instead of having their own separate committees. In response to this requirement, the Town of Pelham along with the Town Lincoln, Township of West Lincoln, City of Thorold, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, The City of Port Colborne and the Town of Grimsby partnered together and established the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC). Funds are pooled by each municipal partner to contract a consultant with the mandate to establish and coordinate compliance with the AODA for each municipality.

The Town of Pelham continues to be an active member in the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC). Services of The Herrington Group have been continually engaged to ensure compliance with AODA, at a cost of \$10,000 per municipality. This cost has remained unchanged since the inception of the JAAC.

The JAAC is comprised of two representative members from each of the partner municipalities.

Analysis:

The AODA requires that the Council of a municipality prepare an accessibility report each year and adopt an Annual Accessibility Plan and provide accessibility training. In addition to these tasks, the JAAC group also audits and re-audits municipal facilities to address physical barriers ahead of the 2025 legislative deadline, aid staff in AODA interpretation and compliance support and comment on other documents as requested by the municipality. As the Town is a participant in the JAAC, access to the dedicated and knowledgeable committee members affords the opportunity to rely on the JAAC to spearhead requirements to facilitate the Town to remain in compliance with the legislation.

The volunteers, working closely with the Consultant, are dedicated to ensuring compliance and this work greatly reduces the burden on municipal staff in this regard. Without this resource and the variety of insights that each committee member and the Consultant bring, the Town would be left to its own individual resources to ensure compliance with the AODA and would require a dedicated staff person, at least on a part-time basis, to fulfill the requirements. The cost of this would exceed the partnership contribution and is not being recommended.

A copy of the proposal to coordinate the AODA compliance for 2024-2026 by The Herrington Group Ltd. is included as Appendix A.

The cost per municipality has remained unchanged for many years, at \$10,000 annually. In addition to the consultant, The Herrington Group Ltd., the JAAC has been functioning collaboratively with membership from each represented municipality, as above outlined. The Clerks from all partnering municipalities also meet on a regular basis to communicate compliance requirements.

Financial Considerations:

The Town can continue in its partnership with its neighbouring municipalities and contribute \$10,000 a year for the services provided or can consider hiring additional staff, at least on a part time basis, to ensure AODA compliance.

Alternatives Reviewed:

Although Council can direct staff to hire an additional part time staff compliment to ensure AODA compliance this is not recommended as the cost of this would exceed the annual partnership contribution.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Community Development and Growth

Ensuring compliance of the AODA demonstrates the Town of Pelham's commitment to developing an accessible community for all residents and visitors and therefore builds a strong community.

Consultation:

JAAC Area Clerks

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

2024-2026 Proposal to Coordinate AODA Compliance

Prepared and Recommended by:

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Town Clerk

Prepared and Submitted by:

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