

City Council approves updates to Street and Traffic Bylaw

On Oct. 22, City Council amended the Street and Traffic Bylaw to include changes to speed limits of two road segments, changes to some bylaw definitions, changes to the City's Truck Route network and changes to accommodate cycling on multi-use pathways and how cyclists cross the road.

In their report to City Council, staff recommended reducing the speed limit on a steep section of the Marshall Road Extension from Peardonville Road to 900 metres west of Peardonville Road and from 300 metres east of Ross Road to Ross Road to 50 kilometres per hour. They also advised increasing the speed limit on McKenzie Road from Fern Street to Dahl Crescent to 40 kilometres per hour.

Staff noted that updating definitions within Section 1 of the Street and Traffic Bylaw is necessary to ensure clarity, conciseness and consistency with other laws and bylaws.

Staff recommended that the City's designated Truck Route network be updated to include all roads in Industrial zoned areas, with the exception of Windsor Street since it is partially residential. This is to ensure that goods are moved as efficiently as possible.

Finally, staff said allowing cycling on off-street cycling lanes and multi-use pathways ensures the connectivity of the City's growing cycling network that will see improvements as the City densifies. It will also allow cycling to develop and grow as a viable alternative to motorized transportation.

City Council passes new Good Neighbour Bylaw

On Oct. 22, City Council passed a new Good Neighbour Bylaw that combines the old Good Neighbour Bylaw from 2003 with the Controlled Substance Property Bylaw from 2006.

In their presentation to City Council, staff said consolidating the two bylaws will streamline and clarify these regulations, simplify and unify the City's approach to managing property standards and controlled substances, and enhance enforcement efficiency.

There are a number of key changes as a result of this new bylaw:

- **Light pollution:** New light pollution rules require outdoor lights to be shielded to avoid disturbing others, with exceptions for street lights, vehicle lights and certain seasonal and recreational lights.
- **Dumping:** Dumping prohibitions will be expanded to include discarded materials and garbage on private property and require prompt removal and remediation by offenders.
- **Infrastructure aesthetics:**
 - Updated guidelines will ensure buildings and fences are free from decay or instability, enhancing neighborhood safety and appearance.
 - Property owners must prevent and eliminate noxious weeds in compliance with provincial and federal regulations.
- **Vacant properties:** New mandates will require vacant properties to be secured with structural barriers, security fencing, alarms and patrols.
- **Controlled substance regulations:** There will be enhanced coordination for safety inspections with relevant authorities to ensure timely identification of hazardous conditions and support the execution of criminal investigation warrants and prompt responses to emergency calls. The definition of "controlled substance" has also been changed to align with federal regulations, encompassing lawful possession authorized by the Minister of Health. This broader scope applies to specific authorizations or orders, ensuring comprehensive compliance.

City Council direct staff to move Accessibility Plan to next stage

On Oct. 8, City Council directed staff to present their draft Community Accessibility Plan – Action Plan at an upcoming Accessibility and Equity Advisory Committee (AEAC) meeting. If AEAC is supportive of the plan, a complete draft will go back to City Council for consideration.

In their presentation to City Council, staff provided an overview of the input received during the plan's community engagement phase. Ten in-person public engagement sessions were held in public schools, libraries and recreation centres in eight neighbourhoods. There were also two virtual sessions and two stakeholders' sessions involving 19 community organizations supporting those experiencing accessibility and inclusion challenges.

Staff then shared the data they collected with internal departments to facilitate the creation of a city-wide Action Plan. The plan considers the principles of inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination and universal design.

The Action Plan has been organized into four key focus areas which align with the Accessible Canada Act and Accessible British Columbia Act: Inclusive Service Design and Delivery, Accessible Communication and Engagement, Built Environment and Public Spaces, and Accessible Procurement.

The intention of these areas is not to provide services and programs that are accessible for a full range of abilities, ensure that people with disabilities are consulted and can easily share feedback and information through accessible feedback mechanisms, ensure buildings and other public spaces are accessible to community members following universal design guidelines, and ensure goods provided and services rendered are accessible by design, where possible, so that individuals with disabilities can use them without adaptations.

City Council adopts 2025 Permissive Tax Exemption Bylaw

On Oct. 29, City Council adopted the Permissive Tax Exemption Bylaw for the coming year, which provides relief from property taxation to organizations that contribute to the spiritual, social, educational, cultural and physical well-being of the community.

In their Report to City Council, staff noted that together 186 local organizations – mainly places of worship, non-profits and athletic or services clubs – will receive an estimated 2025 tax exemption on land and improvements of \$2,040,800.

Permissive tax exemptions reduce the net assessed value of properties subject to taxation. These exemptions, however, are vital for and designed to support organizations that add to the City of Abbotsford's quality of life by delivering economic, social and cultural programs and which, under ordinary circumstances, would be subject to property tax.

City Council authorizes application for \$41K in UBCM funding for firefighter training

On Oct. 22, City Council authorized staff to apply for \$41,366 in funding from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities Community Emergency Preparedness Fund for Volunteer and Composite Fire Departments Equipment and Training.

In their report to City Council, staff explained that this grant would assist Abbotsford Fire Rescue Service in training its approximately 75 Paid-on-Call Firefighters to a higher standard more aligned with its 125 Career Firefighters.

This up-to-date leadership and incident management training would provide the Paid-on-Call Firefighters with a greater understanding of strategies and tactics, increase their knowledge and skills; develop their confidence and allow them to better support and lead their hall members.

Furthermore, Abbotsford has mutual aid agreements with the Township of Langley, Mission, Chilliwack and Sumas, Wash. This increased level of training will enhance communications, streamline efficiency at emergency scenes and enable our firefighters to operate under their command with similar understanding.