



Corporation of the City of  
**NEW WESTMINSTER**

**Joint Meeting of the:  
COVID-19: AT-RISK &  
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS TASK FORCE  
&  
COVID-19: SENIORS & PERSONS LIVING  
WITH DISABILITIES TASK FORCE  
Minutes**

**August 18, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.**

*(Due to precautionary health measures, only City staff are permitted to personally attend meetings)*

**PRESENT (via Teleconference):**

***Staff:***

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, Development Services  
John Stark, Co-Chair/Supervisor, Community Planning  
Jay Young, Co-Chair/Manager, Recreation Services  
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst  
Bal Varn, Licensing and Integrated Services  
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, Legislative Services

***Organizational Representatives:***

Melita Caissie, Fraserside Community Services Society  
Calvin Donnelly, Sapperton Old Age Pensioners' Association  
Fay Duxbury, New Westminster Family Place  
Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Housing Society  
Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC/Lived Experience  
Kay Johnson, New West Hospice Society  
Natalie Johnston, Fraser Health, Community Health Specialist  
Carter LaFontaine, Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice  
Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral  
Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction  
Karl San Ramon, Seniors Services Society  
Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society

The meeting convened at 1:00 p.m. and John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, assumed the Chair.

**1. Introductions & Roll Call**

Introductions and a roll call took place.

## 2. Joint Meeting Minutes

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded members that the minutes are not verbatim and are a summary of the meeting, capturing key discussion points.

### Joint Task Force Items

## 3. Update on Standing Items

### *Task Force Web Portal and Weekly Email Update*

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, reminded Task Force members that as we enter the fourth wave of the pandemic, it is important to continue sharing and maintain updates on the resource documents located on the Task Force Web Portal for faith-based and non-profit organizations, their clients, and residents. Information on the Web Portal includes Key Information and Resources for Tenants, the List of Financial Supports, the Food Resources Calendar, the Survival Resources Guide, and the COVID-19 Trusted Links and Resources List.

Mr. Medic advised that in order to make the resource summary emails more user friendly, they will be streamlined to include less attachments and more links to information. He asked that members who wish to share information with the group send links that can be include in the emails.

### *Financial Resources and COVID-19 Updates*

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, provided the following updates to the List of Financial Resources which is updated on a monthly basis:

- The Canada Recovery Benefit, the Canada Sickness Benefit, and the Canada Recovery and Care Benefit have all been extended to October 23, 2021;
- A one-time Canada Old Age Security payment will be provided for seniors born on or before June 30, 1947;
- The Federal Child Benefit amount has been increased; and,
- Funding opportunities include:
  - The Investment Readiness Program;
  - The Emergency Food Security Fund; and,
  - A call for proposals for a Substance Abuse and Addiction Program.

With respect to COVID-19 statistics, Mr. Johnson shared that 87 percent of New Westminster residents 12 years of age and over have had at least one dose of the vaccine, with 78 percent having had two doses of the vaccine. This puts New Westminster second, on both counts, out of the 13 Fraser Health areas. He noted that

COVID cases have gone up overall, including in New Westminster albeit still less than what was experienced during winter and spring.

#### *Tenant Resources Update*

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised that there are no significant updates to tenant resources and that further tenant protection information will be included in the Task Force summary email. He shared that the rent increase freeze has been extended until December 31, 2021, as well as a cap on rent increases beginning in 2022 at the rate of inflation.

*Youth Services Update* - No update was provided.

#### **4. Food Security Planning Update**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, and Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, advised of food security planning and program updates, including:

- The City has been accessing funds through the Reaching Home Grant Program which have supported the five food security and resource hubs, shower and laundry initiatives, portable toilets, etc. Currently, the City is in the process of receiving the fourth grant from the Program, and is grateful for the Program as it has helped a lot of people;
- In addition to funding programs and initiatives, the Reaching Home Grant monies allow for better coordination to respond to issues and will support the recent posting of a 10 hours per week position for an assistant to work with Ms. Wheeler on issues that have not yet been addressed;
- From September 10, 2021 to January 2022, the food security and resources hub located at St. Barnabas Anglican Church will be out of commission as they work on their facility redevelopment plans; however, Shiloh-Fifth Avenue United Church has been working with them to run the food security and resource hub. St. Barnabas Anglican Church will still offer Christmas Dinner and will keep a small amount of food on site for those in need; and,
- Child care and other community supports will continue at St. Barnabas Anglican Church as they determine how they can provide affordable housing to the community through redevelopment, as well as establishing what their food programming will look like in the future.

The Venerable Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral, announced that they are also applying for redevelopment of their property and will be considering their food programming over the next year and a half. He added that while churches are still interested in providing food programming, they are looking at other ways to serve the

community such as through affordable housing which may lessen their the ability to provide food services for a period of time.

Mr. Stark announced that a new Homelessness Action Strategy and Implementation Plan will be developed in the fall and will also address food security.

Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC/Lived Experience, suggested that when undergoing redevelopment, facilities consider incorporating wheelchair accessible kitchens for which they may receive funding through BC Rehab and other organizations.

## **5. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that the City provided \$90,000 for enhanced homeless outreach, referral and advocacy services, as it looks to have trained outreach workers specific to this vulnerable population. Lookout Housing and Health Society was awarded the contract and has hired one outreach worker and will hire another one soon to assist people to get the help and support they need.

Mr. Stark advised of the challenges encountered in securing additional shelter space, noting that some locations did not work out at the last minute and that other locations were not appropriate. He acknowledged that all parties are somewhat frustrated at the situation but continue to work to secure additional shelter space, with the goal of having the space available in the fall 2021.

Additionally, Mr. Stark shared that the City is continuing to work on providing up to 52 supportive housing units in the Downtown area with occupancy anticipated to take place in in 14 to 18 months upon approval by Council. He stated that the challenge is where to place people in the interim.

In response to a question from a Task Force member, Mr. Stark shared that the Cliff Block, which has been an extreme weather shelter for the last five years and which became the Emergency Response Centre (ERC) when the ERC at the Massey Theater closed in July of 2020, are developing a multi-disciplinary health clinic which will result in individuals currently staying having to be relocated. He advised that the City is hopeful that an identified space for them will proceed further and that once the due diligence on the site is complete, information will be shared with the various faith-based and non-profit organizations to advocate advancement of the new housing.

## **6. Strengthening Communities' Services Program Update**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded members of the Strengthening Communities' Services Program and announced that the City was approved for its full

\$463,000 funding request. The funding, which will be from August 1, 2021 to May 31, 2022, will be used to support projects including but not limited to:

- The Health Contact Centre for outreach;
- The I's on the Street Program expansion;
- Homelessness coordination services and additional support;
- The New West Hospice Society Advanced Care Support;
- The Community Action Network; and,
- The Urban Indigenous Away from Home Program Training Program

Mr. Stark advised that \$10,000 was received under the Reaching Home Grant Program for the ID Bank, with the City providing \$10,000 for that initiative as well. A request for proposals will go out to offer the service within an existing non-profit organization.

Bettina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society advised that Queensborough is in need of and will be receiving additional food security support based on what is being seen at the Saturday pop ups.

### **At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force Items**

#### **7. Health Contact Centre (HCC)**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that the Health Contact Centre continues to operate, noting that a gap in service is being experienced as the HCC, which is run by the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, opens in the afternoon leaving patrons unable to access services during the morning hours. As such, the City will be working with Fraser Health to expand the HCC's hours of operation.

Mr. Stark shared that the HCC offers food, washroom facilities, and a lounge area to provide supervision after consumption. Consideration will be made to possibly offer a shower facility and washers and dryers at the site as well.

#### **8. Shower and Laundry Initiatives**

Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, shared that the temporary move of the shower service from the Canada Games Pool (CGP) to Centennial Community Centre has resulted in a drop in users, noting that the initiative remains successful and that it will move back to the CGP in September. She advised that they are working through some challenges that have arisen including clients still wanting to use the CGP facilities to shower and bringing non-service pets on site. Consideration is being made to providing full-day shower availability as facilities are now open full time, and that an advertising campaign will begin in September to educate the public about the initiative.

Ms. Wheeler advised that it is hoped that the new hire will be able to work on the laundry initiative which is possibly being re-envisioned as a program called Laundry Love and will involve partnering with local laundromats to provide a day of free facility use, including provision of soap, and the assistance of volunteers. The program will begin as a pilot and it is hoped that it will expand to various neighbourhoods for one day a month. Provision of other supports, such as credit counselling, etc., during laundry days will be considered in the future.

## **9. City of New Westminster Inter-Departmental Working Group on Homelessness**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that City established an Inter-Departmental Working Group on Homelessness to address business and resident concerns regarding homelessness. He shared that the Working Group is comprised of a number of City Departments who will work on these challenges which include such things as human waste which is becoming a huge issue.

## **10. Identification of Other Issues and Suggestions to Assist At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations**

In the interest of time, this item was not addressed. Task Force members were encouraged to email any issues or suggestions they may have to Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst.

## **11. Member Updates**

In the interest of time, this items was not addressed.

## **Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities Task Force Items**

Jay Young, Manager, Recreation Services, assumed the Chair.

## **12. Extreme Heat Event and Response Update**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, noted that the city saw 38 sudden deaths, many of which were seniors, during the first of three heat events beginning in late-June. During the first event, cooling facilities were opened and bottled water was distributed through faith-based and non-profit organizations, for the second and third events, the cooling centres remained open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and communications protocols were undertaken through as many groups as possible. Cooling centres were located at Century House, Queensborough Community Centre, and the Anvil Centre. Mr. Stark stated that a lot was learned from these events which will be used and elaborated upon in preparation of future extreme heat occurrences.

Jay Young, Manager, Recreation Services, advised that most of the people who stayed at the cooling centres throughout the night were from the unsheltered population, which staff could be better trained to accommodate and assist in the future. He noted the guests supported the hours for the centres.

Mr. Stark shared that for future extreme heat events, the City will strive to locate cooling centres in areas of the city where people who are unsheltered and have relationships and trust with a faith-based or non-profit organization. The City will seek funding to try to retrofit a faith-based or non-profit organization's existing facility so that it can meet needs moving forward, possibly through the Provincial Emergency Operation Centre funding.

Discussion ensued and Task Force members provided the following comments:

- Suggestion to use some of the re-distributed grant funding to provide specialized training to Parks and Recreation staff so that they feel more comfortable dealing with a variety of people;
- Royal City Taxi should be thanked for providing free rides to cooling centres;
- Fans were unable to cool off church facilities enough for them to be used as cooling centres. St. Barnabas Anglican Church, could be an option to retrofit air conditioning into the space as it undergoes other renovations, allowing it to be a cooling centre in the future;
- Need to be aware of the challenges that may arise when mixing populations;
- Could request a budget enhancement through the Task Force if a possible new cooling centre location is identified, possibly in conjunction with BC Housing;
- Would be important to have a couple of workshops for non-profit staff and volunteers regarding how to assist people with mental health issues;
- Air quality (e.g. air filters) must also be considered given the uptick in wildfires and related smoke;
- Facilities undergoing renovations should contemplate providing wheelchair accessible kitchens and installing HVAC; and,
- We must be just as prepared for extreme cold events.

### **13. Friendly Support Caller Program**

Karl San Ramon, Seniors Services Society, announced that during the month of July the Program had 11 volunteers, 21 clients at an average age of 77 years old, and that a total of 30 calls were made over the course of 664 minutes bringing the average time to 22 minutes per call.

### **14. Century House Food Program**

Jay Young, Manager, Recreation Services, shared that he and Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, are investigating different options for

delivery of this service, noting that the number of those partaking in the program has gone down. He advised that most of the patrons are not seniors so, while the program is still serving the community, it is not necessarily benefitting the seniors population which was the original intent of the program.

Ms. Wheeler stated that the Gurdwara is open to delivering these meals anywhere in the city with residents of Legion Manor, Dunwood Place, and Ross Tower possibly receiving the meals. Those who are picking up the meals at Century House, if still interested, would have the option of picking them up from the lobby at the Legion Manor but not in the numbers they are currently taking.

A Task Force member suggested that now may be a good time to reach out to volunteer driver groups to provide assistance in getting seniors to programs at Century House as they open up.

It was requested that the Walking Buddies Initiative be placed on the next meeting's agenda.

#### **15. Identification of Other Issues and Suggestions to Assist Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities**

Task Force members were urged to send any issues or suggestions to Anur Mehdić, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst.

#### **16. Member Updates**

In the interest of time, this item was not addressed.

### **Next Step & Meeting Schedule**

#### **17. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule**

Anur Mehdić, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised that the joint Task Force meetings would continue to be held every three week, noting that the next meeting will be held on September 8, 2021.

The meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.

Original Signed  
**John Stark, Co-Chair**

Original Signed  
**Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk**