

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

December 9, 2020 at 1:00 p.m., Committee Room 2 – City Hall
(Due to precautionary health measures, only City staff are permitted to personally attend meetings)

PRESENT (in Person):

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst

PRESENT (via Teleconference):

Staff:

John Stark, Co-Chair/Supervisor, Community Planning
Jacklyn Altamura, Co-Chair/Recreation Supervisor, Century House
Karen Campbell, Policy Planner
Alison Ching, Recreation Leader
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst
Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Community Recreation
Constable Camille Oliveira, New Westminister Police Department
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk

Organizational Representatives:

Rick Bloudell, School District #40
Melita Caissie, Fraserside Community Services Society
Calvin Donnelly, Sapperton Old Age Pensioners' Association
Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Manor
Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC/Lived Experience
Tim Hicks, Century House
Kay Johnson, New West Hospice Society
Shamina Kallu, Lookout Housing and Health Society
Asifa Lalji, Sustainable Transportation Advisory Committee
Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral
Allison Luke, New Westminister Mental Health and Addictions Centre
Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society/NWOCAT
Pat Steiner, Family Services of Greater Vancouver
Kyoko Takahashi, Seniors Services Society
Betina Wheeler, New Westminister 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 Pending

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that the minutes of the last meeting would be included with the next meeting agenda.

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 members that the Task Force Web Portal assists residents in accessing COVID-19 resources and supports and includes reference documents and lists such as Key Information and Resources for Tenants, the List of Financial Supports, the Food Resources Calendar, the Survival Resources Guide, as well as information regarding the Friendly Support Caller Program, etc. Mr. Mehdic also noted that the Task Force follow-up emails contain this resource information which is organized to be user accessible and convenient for Task Force members.

Financial Resources Update

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, reviewed the Provincial Government's announcements regarding the Temporary BC Recovery Supplement, new grants to assist rural, remote, and Indigenous communities in addressing the overdose epidemic, and the BC Recovery Benefit which will begin accepting applications on December 18, 2020. Mr. Johnson acknowledged that some people may require assistance in requesting the BC Recovery Benefit as there are barriers to applying for it with respect to income tax filing, online access, lack of a bank account, etc.

Tenant Resources Update

Karen Campbell, Policy Planner, advised that the Provincial Government's tenancy website has been updated to advise that masks are now mandatory in common areas of residential buildings such as lobbies, elevators, etc.

Youth Services Update

Paolo Zenone, Recreation Leader, provided various updates, including:

- Regular programs continue to operate; however, the Youth Centre will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, December 28, 2020 (Statutory Holiday with respect to Boxing Day), and New Years Day;
- A mask making program will be offered to youth; and,
- It is anticipated that the Youth Resource Guide will be complete by the end of today, once final updates to the document are received.

Other Updates

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that, as per the suggestion of Task Force members, approximately 800 resource information pamphlets were included in hampers through the various food hamper programs, as well as with residents of the Ross Tower, which may form part of the Hey Neighbour Collective, noting that the pamphlets can also be shared at other residential buildings in the community.

Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, shared that it is anticipated that financial and health resource information will be distributed in the same way in January 2021.

4. BC COVID-19 SPEAK Survey Results

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, briefly reviewed the results of the BC COVID-19 SPEAK Survey noting that it was one of the largest public health surveys in history with over 40,000 people participating. He noted that the survey addressed how the pandemic has impacted various groups in a variety of ways such as mental health struggles, finances, housing, etc., and demonstrated how to access the survey information online.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, noted that the survey results may assist faith and non-profit organizations in accessing grants.

5. Food Security Plans Update

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

- Members were reminded that the City and the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society have applied for funding from the Federal Government's

Reaching Home Initiative to support up to five food security and resource hubs. The funding would assist in the expansion of food hubs in the City and allow Ms. Wheeler to continue working with various organizations on community food programming;

- Council has shown support for, but not yet approved, funding for food security planning and programming after April 1, 2021; and,
- A lot of effort is going into ensuring that people get the support they need during this challenging time, including to help them from homelessness.

Discussion ensued regarding Christmas supports and the following comments were received:

- The Food Resource Calendar is currently being updated for the Holiday Season and will be sent out by the end of the week;
- The Lower Mainland Purpose Society's Hamper Program will continue;
- The School District received \$16,000 in grocery store gift cards which principals will allocate to needy families in their communities with some being left over for community referrals where needed;
- If the Province goes back to pandemic phase 1 or 2, resulting in the closure of civic facilities, it may be possible for staff to once again be redeployed to deliver food to those who are housebound;
- A call for volunteers will be placed on Citypage to recruit drivers for grocery delivery through various organizations;
- Additional funding from the Provincial Government for seniors' food services may be forthcoming; however, that is yet to be confirmed; and,
- Additional supports for individuals with disabilities and those who are immunocompromised also need to be considered.

6. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that staff continue working with BC Housing to secure space that will accommodate up to 50 people for an Emergency Response Centre that meets physical distancing requirements; however, securing such a space has been very challenging and the space that was under consideration in the Downtown area is no longer in negotiation. As such, smaller spaces are being sought and considered with the acknowledgment that using multiple locations presents additional challenges, including staffing and other logistical considerations.

Mr. Stark reminded members that the City is looking to apply for Rapid Housing Initiative funding for up to 100 units of supportive housing that would be offered at two sites. Preliminary work on this project is still underway.

7. Health Contact Centre Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that Fraser Health has placed a call for proposals for a non-profit operator of the Health Contact Centre, which will be established to address the opioid epidemic, as well as provide other much needed services for our vulnerable population. The desired location is Downtown and, if required, a Zoning Amendment or Temporary Use Permit will be expedited to facilitate the Centre opening in early 2021.

8. Identification of Other Issues and Suggestions to Assist At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations

- Funding will be requested from the Pacific Region Emergency Operations Centre in order to increase the number of portable toilets and, as organizations can offer no or limited showering facilities, staff will be meeting on December 11, 2020 to discuss the possibility of providing access to civic facilities for shower use;
- Current available portable toilets are wheelchair accessible and a map will be provided to members indicating their locations;
- Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC/Lived Experience, will provide information to Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, regarding an app that lists where washrooms can be found;
- Regarding cold weather shelters for youth, John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that he could meet with the City of Burnaby's Senior Social Planner to revisit the possibility of using a rental property, with the assistance of Provincial Government funding, to provide this accommodation; and,
- It was noted that the Lower Mainland Purpose Society previously had space for up to 10 youth; however, as youth prefer to couch surf instead, approximately only three of those spaces were used so the allotment was discontinued. Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society/NWOCAT, offered to pass this request on to the appropriate person to determine what options for youth are currently available.

9. Member Updates

Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Community Recreation, shared that Kids New West conducted a questionnaire through October and November 2020 in order to identify community needs and it was found that vulnerable populations are not accessing resource information. As such, Ms. Manzer invited members to contact either her or Lisa Paterson to share information and/or suggestions to facilitate access to resource information. This will be included in the meeting follow-up email.

Procedural note: John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, left the meeting at 1:56 p.m. and Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, Century House, assumed the Chair.

Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities Task Force Items

10. Seniors Housing Lab Resources

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared that in the fall of 2019 the Seniors Housing Lab was created to provide space for discussion of seniors housing issues with various stakeholders such as the Seniors Services Society, as well as researchers from Simon Fraser University. Mr. Mehdic advised that discussions will address, amongst other topics, facilitating seniors aging in place, noting that factors leading to housing instability for seniors includes rent escalation, low vacancy rates, physical and cognitive decline, mental health, etc.

Kyoko Takahashi, Seniors Services Society, and Mr. Mehdic, shared two infographics with members and outlined senior housing issues and what is required to address them such as health support, financial support, housing support, and food security.

11. Friendly Support Caller Program

Alison Ching, Recreation Leader, shared that the Program now has a total of 15 volunteers and 30 clients. She noted that since the last meeting, 11 calls were made over 241 minutes, averaging 21.9 minutes per call.

Ms. Ching advised that a Vital Connections counsellor attended their last volunteer caller meeting and will also attend the next meeting to discuss coping over the Holidays.

Pat Steiner, Family Services of Greater Vancouver, will contact Ms. Ching after the meeting to discuss possible volunteers for the Program.

12. Identification of Other Issues and Suggestions to Assist Seniors and Person Living with Disabilities

- Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC/Lived Experience, will provide a list of questions to Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, regarding the Digital Inclusion Project that the City is working on with Douglas College and the Lower Mainland Purpose Society;
- Mr. Mehdic advised that it is anticipated that a report will be going to Council in late-December/early-January regarding the project and that he will contact the lead to address Ms. Garcia's questions, as well as project outreach;
- Tim Hicks, Century House, shared that Telus has announced its Mobility for Good, a program for low-income seniors and those with disabilities; and,

- Mr. Hicks advised that Century House staff will do their best to assist seniors with document scanning needed for on-line government benefit applications.

13. Member Updates

Kyoko Takahashi, Seniors Services Society, offered to contact Key West Ford about the possibility of them providing rides for seniors to COVID testing facilities in addition to medical appointments. Ms. Takahashi will report back at the next meeting.

Next Step & Meeting Schedule

14. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, Century House, advised that the next meeting of the Task Forces will be held on Wednesday, January 13, 2021 and wished everyone a wonderful Holiday Season.

The meeting adjourned at 2:22 p.m.

Original Signed _____
Jacklyn Altamura
Co-Chair

Original Signed _____
Carilyn Cook
Committee Clerk