

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

**November 25, 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  
Shelley Cole, Bylaw Officer, Tenant Support Coordinator  
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk  
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst  
Jim Luu, Assistant Manager  
Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Community Recreation  
Jennifer Miller, Manager, Public Engagement  
Constable Camille Oliveira, New Westminister Police Department  
Paolo Zenone, Recreation Leader

***Organizational Representatives:***

Rick Bloudell, School District #40  
Melita Caissie, Fraserside Community Services Society  
Fay Duxbury, New Westminister Family Place  
Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Manor  
Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC/Lived Experience  
Tim Hicks, Century House  
Kay Johnson, New West Hospice Society  
Asifa Lalji, Sustainable Transportation Advisory Committee  
Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral  
Regis Medina Oliva, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society/NWOCAT  
Patricia Steiner, Family Services of Greater Vancouver  
Kyoko Takahashi, 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. Review of New Joint Meeting Minutes**

No comments were received.

## **Joint Task Force Items**

### **3. COVID-19 Recovery Engagement Summary and Next Steps**

Jennifer Miller, Manager, Public Engagement, noted that the COVID-19 Recovery Engagement Summary had been emailed to Task Force members and thanked those that participated in the engagement process. Results of the engagement process indicated that the pandemic has not affected everyone in the same way, that affordable housing is needed, that the unsheltered population must be taken care of, that social interaction is necessary, etc. Ms. Miller asked Task Force members what next steps they would recommend.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that staff, on behalf of the Task Forces, have requested that Council approve funding for the coming year to facilitate outreach of resources and for an additional Planning Analyst to work on a number of affordable housing projects, six of which are currently underway, with 10 proposed. This could help address the after effects of the pandemic, particularly related to shelter and housing.

John Stark noted that members may need more time to review the large volume of information contained in the Summary and shared the importance of providing Council with a sense of priorities when responding to the pandemic and that some groups are underrepresented. Task Force members were encouraged to contact Ms. Miller directly if they had further comments and/or questions noting that she anticipated providing feedback received to Council in December 2020.

#### 4. Update on Standing Items

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

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, reminded members of the COVID-19 web portal, a one-stop shop for pandemic related resources, which is updated on a regular basis. He noted that the List of Financial Supports was updated last week.

With respect to the weekly Task Force resource email, Mr. Mehdic advised that time sensitive requests will be at the top of the email, followed by major weekly updates, information and campaigns (e.g., for Christmas), upcoming and recurring events, surveys, upcoming Council reports, recently released studies and, lastly, the Task Force table. Members were urged to provide feedback on the emails directly to Mr. Mehdic.

##### *Financial Resources Update*

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, reviewed new government programs such as the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative, the Black Entrepreneurship Program, etc., and noted that the Emergency Wage Subsidy and the Canadian Emergency Rent Subsidy have been extended until June 2021.

##### *Tenant Resources Update*

Karen Campbell, Policy Planner, advised that there have been no new updates to report since the last meeting and reminded members that the freeze on rent increases was extended to July 10, 2021.

##### *Youth Services Update*

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

- The Youth Resource Page is currently being updated and anyone with additions to the Page are asked to contact Mr. Zenone directly;
- Upcoming events include a Holiday House Party, an online game night, and the lighting of the holiday lights at the Youth Centre, etc.; and,
- The Zoom Squad, an online drop in program, has started and allows youth workers and staff to interact with kids.

Mr. Zenone noted that in-person event would be contingent on Public Health Orders.

## **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:

- The City and the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society have applied for \$101,000 from the Federal Government's Reaching Home Initiative to support up to five food security and resource hubs which would provide hampers and meals, food preparation and nutrition advice, hygiene products, and information on financial benefits and other government programs. The funding would allow the expansion of food hubs in the city and allow Ms. Wheeler to continue her role in assisting with community food programming;
- Calls are coming into St. Barnabas Anglican Church for food for seniors unable to get out; therefore they are seeking volunteer drivers to deliver hampers;
- The Lower Mainland Purpose Society is handing out food bags on Fridays, the food van is feeding up to 800 people, 130 hamper requests have been received; and,
- The At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force's Second Wave Plan states that if we are rolled back to pandemic Phase 1 or 2, the City would redeploy staff to assist with food security programming, making deliveries, etc.

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

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that the City continues to work with BC Housing on an Emergency Response Centre that meets physical distancing requirements and can accommodate up to 50 people at one time with access to showers, have outdoor space, etc. One site that is being explored would supply up to 50 spaces and it is hoped that an update on this option can be provided to the Task Forces in the next few weeks. If that site cannot be leased, a number of smaller spaces that would hold 15 to 20 people may have to be explored. Mr. Stark assured members that the City and BC Housing recognize the urgency of the situation given the time of year and weather.

In addition, Mr. Stark shared that the City is also working with senior levels of government to secure up to 100 units of supportive housing which would be dependent on government funding and anticipated to be completed over the next 12 to 18 months.

Mr. Stark announced that the Task Force has requested Council approved funding to hire a Planning Analyst for up to two years to work with faith and non-profit organizations on development proposal application processes, as well as for a consultant for up to seven hours per day to work with the same organizations on density, land use, and pro forma assistance.

## **7. Health Contact Centre Update**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded members that a report went to Council approximately a month ago regarding the Health Contact Centre, which would include an overdose prevention site and other harm reduction services. It is anticipated to be operational within three to six months, depending on Fraser Health and the development approval process. Currently, Fraser Health is seeking a non-profit operator to run the Centre which will, hopefully, be located in the Downtown area. Mr. Stark added that as well as being in the middle of a pandemic, we are also in the midst of an overdose epidemic so this much needed facility is a Council priority.

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

- An issue arising over the last two weeks is the lack of access to shower facilities; however, an Emergency Response Centre will address needs with respect to showering, etc., and it may be possible to open civic facilities for shower use;
- Fraser Health continues to operationalize its COVID-19 testing centres and once they are all fully operational, they will look at opening new facilities for testing. As such, the City is looking at potential sites to offer for use as testing and vaccination centres, including one for the street entrenched population;
- It has been communicated to Fraser Health that consideration needs to be made with respect to access to testing sites for those with mobility limitations;
- The clinic run by the Lower Mainland Purpose Society offers COVID-19 antibody testing on Fridays for the at-risk community, and those with symptoms are referred to a testing site; and,
- Staff will look into what BC211 offers in the way of COVID-19 testing for seniors and share the information with members.

## **9. Member Updates**

### *External Member Updates*

- Fay Duxbury, New Westminster Family Place, shared that they are no longer located on Sixth Street and they are now at Holy Trinity Cathedral, First Presbyterian Church, and outside at parks. She noted that with the last Public Health Order, all programs are now run online;
- Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, announced an offer that was received for a large amount of non-medical grade masks and bottles of disinfectant, noting that the donor is able to store it locally and deliver as needed. Organizations in need of personal protective equipment (PPE) or disinfectant are urged to contact Ms. Wheeler within the next week to place orders; and,

- John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded members that there is a small amount of funding available (\$2,400) to help organizations purchase PPE via a pre-approved purchase request which will be available until December 31, 2020. Those interested should contact Anur Mehdić, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, with their invoice.

## Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities Task Force Items

Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, Century House, assumed the Chair.

### 10. Friendly Support Caller Program

Alison Ching, Recreation Leader, shared a four week update on the Friendly Support Caller Program noting that the Program now has a total of 15 volunteers and 28 clients, and another client on the waitlist, and they are actively seeking two more volunteers. She noted that from October 29 to November 24, 2020, there have been a total of 40 calls over 949 minutes, averaging 24 minutes per call and clients report that they enjoy the calls and many have a more hopeful outlook after receiving their phone call.

Ms. Ching advised that at tomorrow's volunteer meeting, a Vital Connections counsellor will be in attendance and provide them with an update on the Senior Peer Counselling Program which will be starting up again soon.

Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, announced that the Program was recently promoted through flyers inserted into food hampers so there may be an uptick in registration for the program.

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

- Tim Hicks of Century House outlined the history and purpose of Century House's technical focus groups which teach seniors how to use technology in a safe and comfortable learning environment either including Seniors Embracing Technology (SET), etc. It was noted that these initiatives are being advertised through Century House Association's Clarion newsletter, the Century House website, the Friendly Support Caller Program, word of mouth, etc., and in the New Westminster Record;
- Facilitating the seniors use of technology has helped them through the pandemic and enabled them to utilize online programs;
- Information regarding the Douglas College's Digital Inclusion Project, which aims to provide technology to the at-risk and seniors communities, will soon be shared on the City's website; and,
- The Telus and Shaw programs which offer affordable access to technology to low-income families and seniors are listed in the List of Financial Supports on the Task Force Web Portal and included in the weekly Task Force information emails as well.

## 12. Member Updates

### *Staff Updates*

Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, advised that peer counselling and the Vital Connections programs are starting up again through Century House and will be taking new clients.

### *External Member Updates*

Kyoko Takahashi, Seniors Services Society, announced the start of Santa for Seniors noting that this year they are seeking donations of retail gift cards for retailers and have received a good response from the community thus far.

Ms. Takahashi also shared that their organization is in need of grocery shopping volunteers and urged members to ask anyone they know who may be interested in assisting to contact the Seniors Services Society. John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that staff will create an advertisement for this volunteer call to be published on Citypage.

## Next Step & Meeting Schedule

## 13. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, advised that the next meeting of the Task Forces will be on December 9, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Original Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
**John Stark**  
**Chair**

Original Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
**Carilyn Cook**  
**Committee Clerk**