

**COVID-19: AT-RISK &
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS TASK FORCE
Minutes**

April 22, 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):

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning/Chair
Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst
Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner
Nazanin Esmaeili, Planning Assistant
Rob Dick, Assistant Deputy Fire Chief
Dylan Myers, Acting Emergency Support Services (ESS) Chief Deputy
Mike Antoniali, Acting ESS Operations Coordinator
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk

PRESENT (via Teleconference):

Staff:

Shelly Cole, Bylaw Officer, Tenant Support Coordinator
Diana McDaniel, Inspector, New Westminster Police Department
Camille Oliveira, Constable, New Westminster Police Department
Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Centennial Community Centre
Karen Campbell, Planner
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst
Silisha Ali, Youth Program Coordinator
Ryan Weber, Program Coordinator, Queensborough Community Centre

Organizational Representatives:

Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Edith Tazumi, Union Gospel Mission
Linda Fletcher-Gordon, Lower Mainland Purpose Society for Youth and Families
Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society
Kyoko Takahashi, Seniors Services Society
Kimiko Karpoff, United Church of Canada
Lorrie Wasyliw, Monarch Place (WINGS)
Betina Wheeler, New West Homelessness Coalition Society
Leonard Levy, Lookout Housing and Health Society
Sukhdeep Jassar, Fraser Health
Melita Caissie, Fraserside Community Services Society
Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral
Fay Duxbury, New West Family Place
Allison Luke, Fraser Health

The meeting convened at 1:00 p.m.

1. Introductions

Task Force members introduced themselves.

2. Review of Draft Minutes

No comments were received.

3. Update on Actions Taken Since Meeting of April 15, 2020

Community Resource and Task Force Web Portal Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised that an updated list of financial support resources and tax filer information has been posted to the City's website, and that the community resources page has been updated as well. Task Force members were asked to send updates and suggestions directly to Mr. Mehdic.

Survival Guide and Food Resource Calendar Update

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, reminded Task Force members to forward updates for the Food Resource Calendar and Survival Guide to her, noting that the updated documents would be disseminated and posted on the City's website by the end of the day tomorrow. Members were urged to share them with their communities.

Resource Request Form Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reiterated that the online Resource Request Form is for documenting a needed product or service, not for direct financial support, noting that all aspects of the Form should be completed, including the reason for the request and the anticipated length of time it will be required, and that requests related to the pandemic will assist the City in receiving reimbursement of funds from the Provincial Government.

Youth Services Update

Silisha Ali, Youth Program Coordinator, shared that they are currently creating an Instagram template to inform youth where and how they can receive counselling, food support, etc., and that a request will be sent for informational posters that will be posted in the windows of the Youth Centre. Ryan Weber, Program Coordinator, confirmed that all information and updates will be tied together through social media, Citypage, the Youth Centre windows, the City's website, etc.

In response to a suggestion from a Task Force member, Ms. Ali agreed to contact other municipalities to determine how they are reaching out to and offering services to youth under these circumstances.

Tenant Support Resources

Karen Campbell, Planner, shared information regarding a pamphlet for the City's renters regarding the New Westminster Rent Bank (NWRB) and what is available to them, adding that she has found things that other cities are doing for their renters, which the City may want to consider. Ms. Campbell has also reached out to ACORN and the New West Tenants' Union, and more information will be forthcoming. This topic will continue as a standing item on the Task Force agendas.

Tax Filing Resources

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, shared that since many organizations have cancelled their free tax filing services due to the pandemic, staff are working to implement a program for people to drop off their taxes to be done by volunteers or non-profit organizations. Task Force members were asked to have anyone they know, who may be interested in volunteering to assist with this initiative, contact Lisa Paterson, Community Development Worker, Ministry of Children and Family Development. Further information, including Ms. Paterson's contact information, will be shared in the meeting's follow up e-mail.

4. Food Security Plans Update

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, and Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, shared food security plan updates including:

- The Wednesday hamper program, which is run with the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society, has a number of people and organizations participating and members were reminded to contact staff if they or their clients would like to register for the service, noting that it is for those who would normally use the food bank but are currently unable to do so;
- The Century House Supper Program was attended by 29 people, with 37 meals being served;
- The Purpose Health Van is distributing hot meals on Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays between 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.; and,
- While there is a program through the Elizabeth Fry Society, another program may be needed for the East End.

The Venerable Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral, announced that the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster has published new guidelines for parishes with respect to food programs, and the Cathedral is exploring ways to restart their breakfast program on Thursday mornings.

In response to a question from a Task Force member, Ms. Ali advised that their team will connect with the School District and the Purpose Society's Youth Clinic, as well as pose questions through social media regarding youth food security. Mr. Weber suggested that, during their rounds, the park patrollers may be able to share food resource information with youth.

5. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, informed members that ongoing negotiations with BC Housing regarding an Emergency Response Centre for the Homeless will soon be complete and the Task Force will be advised of the decision shortly thereafter. He advised that the Queen's Park Arena was eliminated from consideration as it was deemed too cold for sheltering purposes. Mr. Stark also shared that a meeting was held with Fraser Health to address health and support services for those who will be staying in the Emergency Response Centre, which will hold up to 40 people.

6. Proposal to Increase Digital Inclusion and Connection

Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, announced work with Douglas College sourcing tablets, laptops, and phones for use by those in temporary housing to keep them connected with services and other people, which is essential in providing hope and connectedness. Task Force members were asked to contact Ms. Pankratz or City staff if they know of someone with items to donate or would like to participate in the initiative. More information will be included in the meeting's follow up e-mail.

7. Reaching Home Designated Community COVID-19 Economic Response Plan Funding

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, explained the above-noted funding initiative for housing, prevention and shelter diversion, health and medical services, data collection, etc. Task Force members were urged to have their organizations apply for the funding by the due date of April 29, 2020; however, it was noted that applications will be accepted until all funds are fully allocated. Further information will be included in the meeting's follow up e-mail.

8. Identification of Other Issues

Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Centennial Community Centre, advised that, with respect to social connectedness and emotional well-being, she has met with Dana Osiowy at New West Family Place to work together and address that aspect of the pandemic.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded members to e-mail Mr. Mehdic if they identify additional issues after the meeting, as well as anything they would like to see added to the agenda.

9. Member Updates

Staff Updates

In response to a question from a Task Force member, John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, agreed to reach out to library staff for possible assistance with households that lack computer skills and on-line platforms in order to stay connected.

Member Updates

- Lookout Housing and Health Society is running an overnight extension of the Extreme Weather Response Plan Program out of the Cliff Block Residence which, during the day, is a warming centre, and at night can accommodate up to 16 people;
- New West Family Place has been utilizing the City-organized food hamper program, and they continue to run their live and recorded family programming on Facebook; and,
- Monarch Place have used hotel room availability to place a family in need, are arranging for crisis phone text ability for women unable to reach out, and staff have recently been cleared from COVID-19 and are fully operational again.

10. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that due to technical difficulties during the virtual meeting, various updates would be included in the follow up e-mail going out to members.

The meeting adjourned at 1:54 p.m.

Original Signed _____
John Stark
Chair

Original Signed _____
Carilyn Cook
Committee Clerk