

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

## **Minutes**

**August 5, 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, Chair/Supervisor, Community Planning  
Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst

### **PRESENT (via Teleconference):**

#### ***Staff:***

Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, Century House  
Silisha Ali, Youth Program Coordinator  
Karen Campbell, Policy Planner  
Shelley Cole, Bylaw Officer, Tenant Support Coordinator  
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst  
Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Centennial Community Centre  
Camille Oliveira, Constable, New Westminster Police Department  
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk

#### ***Organizational Representatives:***

Rick Bloudell, School District #40  
Melita Caissie, Fraserside Community Services Society  
Linda Fletcher-Gordon, Lower Mainland Purpose Society  
Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral  
Leonard Levy, Lookout Housing and Health Society  
Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society  
Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction  
Lorrie Wasyliw, Monarch Place (WINGS)  
Betina Wheeler, New West Homelessness Coalition Society

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 July 8, 2020**

#### *Task Force Web Portal Update*

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, reminded members that the resource information on the Task Force Web Portal is continuously updated, including updates to Key Information and Resources for Tenants, the Food Resources Calendar and Survival Resources Guide, and the List of Financial Supports. Additional information on the City's main website includes the *Everybody Needs to Eat* Food Security Myth Buster as well as current surveys being conducted by the City.

Mr. Mehdic noted that the meeting follow-up emails are being sent to the COVID-19 At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force and the COVID-19 Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Task Force at the same time as they contain resource information relative to both Task Forces.

#### *Tenant Resources Update*

Karen Campbell, Policy Planner, advised that the Provincial Government's moratorium on evictions will be lifted on September 1, 2020 and advised there have been no further announcements from the Provincial Government regarding the Temporary Rental Supplement. Staff continue monitoring the situation and will update the website accordingly.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded Task Force members of the City's Rent Bank Program to which the City contributed \$100,000, and stated that the funds will most likely be used over a one year period based on current demand.

#### *Youth Services Update*

Silisha Ali, Youth Program Coordinator, informed members that Youth Services continues to provide time-specific drop-in sessions in order to maintain a connection with the community's youth, and advised that staff are working to get things safely in place for the September modified drop-in periods.

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, added that the COVID-19 Web Portal also includes a summary of youth resources which is also included in the meeting's follow-up emails.

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, shared that results of the homelessness count, which took place in March 2020 and occurs every three years, have been published and that it appears that the street entrenched population has increased. Links to the statistical reports regarding the numbers garnered during the March count will be included in the meeting's follow-up email.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, added that Mr. Johnson is preparing a foundational report regarding a homelessness needs assessment which will include results from the count as well as findings from faith and non-profit organizations.

#### **4. Food Security Plans Update**

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, and Betina Wheeler, New West Homelessness Coalition Society (NWHCS), shared food security plan updates including:

- The City Hamper Program is transitioning to a new model in partnership with the Holy Trinity Cathedral. Starting in October, participating non-profit organizations can pick up their hampers on Wednesdays from the Cathedral. Those interested in participating should contact Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, or Betina Wheeler, NWHCS;
- The Thursday Supper Program at Century House will continue until at least September, at which time it will be revisited in consideration of the possible reopening of City facilities;
- The Lower Mainland Purpose Society's Hamper Program is still running weekly with the option of either pick-up or delivery of hampers containing fresh produce, meat, and non-perishables. As well, the Health Van continues to distribute food throughout the week, including sandwiches, burritos, and other hand-held foods;
- St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church has received \$50,000 from the United Way to set up a food hub with pop-up programs in various neighbourhoods in the city, including Sapperton and Queensborough, which will continue until the end of March 2021. There is now a food hub coordinator who will support the development of the sites, funding partnerships, as well as sustainability; and,
- First Presbyterian has approached St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church about becoming involved in the food hub, as such application will be made for a federal infrastructure grant to make their current space more usable for food programs.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded Task Force members that Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, is working with Ms. Wheeler and Ms. Pankratz on a proposal for the Provincial Government to develop a pilot food program for the City that would create sustainability as foundational funding is time limited. He noted that the program may serve as a learning tool for other municipalities.

#### **5. Partnership with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition (BCPRC) on Community Action Network (CAN) Training Program**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reviewed the upcoming CAN Training Program which, amongst other things, would educate participants on self and community advocacy and City committee structure, as well as assist staff in developing

principles and resources, including an engagement toolkit, related to those with lived and living experience, to facilitate more inclusive City engagement. The training program is scheduled to start in October and it is hoped that graduates will sit on the City's committees.

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

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that the Mazarine Lodge, a supportive modular housing development located in Queensborough and run by the Elizabeth Fry Society, has passed its final inspections and residents will start moving in this week. As there is still space available at the Lodge, Task Force members were urged to have anyone they know who may benefit from this supportive housing environment contact the Elizabeth Fry Society for more information.

With respect to the Emergency Response Centre (ERC), Mr. Stark reminded Task Force members that, as the School Board was unable to renew the agreement to house the ERC at the Massey Complex due to the resumption of school and the requirement of student access to the Massey Gym, the City and BC Housing have been seeking another facility for the ERC that could be occupied for up to two years as emergency housing and then evolve into a supportive housing residence. In the meantime, clients who were staying at the ERC have moved to the Cliff Block and the Russell Housing Centre.

## **7. Interdepartmental Working Group on the Overdose Epidemic**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, announced that the July 13, 2020 report to Council regarding the City's Interdepartmental Working Group on the Overdose Epidemic which outlined the current actions underway by various City departments resulted in Council directing the Working Group and staff to:

1. Develop a City Overdose Response Action Plan in collaboration with the New Westminster Overdose Community Action Team;
2. Work with Fraser Health to explore an Overdose Prevention Site in New Westminster; and,
3. Work with Fraser Health, with input from the New Westminster Overdose Community Action Team, to explore a Safe Supply Program in New Westminster.

## **8. Identification of Other Issues**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that staff are working on COVID-19 Second Wave Response Plans for each department and task force, noting that task forces may once again need to begin meeting more often to address second wave issues such as expanding food security programs, etc. Regarding a possible

outbreak in a seniors' residential building, this is something that the COVID-19 Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Task Force would address.

Mr. Stark shared that that staff have received numerous calls from businesses and residents expressing concerns with the increase of unsheltered people in the downtown core who are in need of assistance and support. He advised that the City is taking a compassionate approach to address this issue, noting that it is an ongoing challenge to provide shelter options for those individuals and will take time to address.

## 9. Member Updates

- Melita Caissie, Fraserside Community Services Society, reminded members of their substance abuse services for youth and adults living with caregivers including one-on-one clinical counselling. She noted that there has been a concerning increase in people calling for intake;
- Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, advised that the cheques being distributed this month will again include the \$300 COVID crises benefit. She shared that, along with the Rent Bank, they have noticed an upswing in requests for funds from renters to pay outstanding rent or face being evicted and that they are working with applicants to create a plan for them to pay their overdue rent; and,
- Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, reminded members of their Peer Mentorship Program and noted that they would be reaching out to businesses again to connect them with peer navigators if they have concerns regarding unsheltered individuals. She also advised that they secured temporary funding to support housing issues such as temporary rental subsidies. Additional information will be included in the meeting's follow-up email.

## 10. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that in light of the Labour Day long weekend and people preparing for the start of school, the September 2, 2020, Task Force meeting will be cancelled with the next meeting being held on Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting adjourned at 1:47 p.m.

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

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