

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

Minutes

July 8, 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
Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner
Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst
Dylan Myers, Acting Emergency Support Services (ESS) Chief Deputy
Mike Antoniali, Acting ESS Operations Coordinator
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk

PRESENT (via Teleconference):

Staff:

Diana McDaniel, Inspector, New Westminster Police Department
Wendy Bowyer, Constable, New Westminster Police Department
Tim Callaghan, Constable, New Westminster Police Department
Camille Oliveira, Constable, New Westminster Police Department
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst

Organizational Representatives:

Rick Bloudell, School District #40
Melita Caissie, Fraserside Community Services Society
Erin Daly, Fraser Health Authority
Fay Duxbury, New West Family Place
Linda Fletcher-Gordon, Lower Mainland Purpose Society
Kimiko Karpoff, United Church of Canada
Melody Monro, Fraser Health Authority
Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society
Edith Tazumi, Union Gospel Mission
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 June 24, 2020

Task Force Web Portal Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, reminded members that the portal, which was created as a central location for resource information, is continuously updated so they should visit it often and encourage their peers to do so as well.

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, announced that the Financial Resource List has been updated to include two new initiatives: The Youth Community Partnership and Computers for Schools Plus Program. Further information will be provided in the meeting's follow up email.

Tenant Resources Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised that as of June 24, 2020, a number of tenancy laws have resumed including:

- Notice to End Tenancy (for reasons other than unpaid or late payment of rent); and,
- Order of Possession Notices acquired prior to March 20, 2020 may now be enforced.

Mr. Mehdic stated that the moratorium on evictions for non-payment of rent will continue. He noted that the Provincial Government has not yet announced when the moratorium will end; however, once it does, a framework will be put into place to facilitate landlords working with their tenants to recoup overdue rent over an appropriate amount of time. Staff continue to closely monitor provincial updates and will keep the Task Force apprised of changes.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, shared that the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, which operates the New Westminster Rent Bank Program, is forging relationships with the financial sector and that recently the City provided \$100,000 to assist with rent and essential utility arrears. Once the moratorium ends, some individuals may require assistance in meeting their rent or utility payments on a short term basis, as such, a report will be going to Council on Monday, July 13, 2020, regarding the City's continued support of the Rent Bank Program.

Youth Services Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, provided the following Youth Services updates:

- Summer programs are starting this week;
- Initiatives such as sharing resources, directly connecting with youth and creating consistent times for them to connect, as well as community outreach, continue;
- The Arts Council of New Westminster is offering a free youth drop in program next week; and,
- Next Monday and Tuesday programs will be run at the Queen's Park Skate Park.

4. Food Security Plans Update

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, and Betina Wheeler, New West Homelessness Coalition Society (NWHCS), shared food security plan updates including:

- The City and Greater Vancouver Food Bank's Hamper Program will run until the end of July, and staff continue seeking ways to keep it going from August onwards;
- The Tuesday and Thursday Supper Program at Century House will continue until September, at which time it will be reviewed;
- Work on a COVID-19 Food Security Recovery Funding Proposal to senior government continues;
- The Queensborough Hamper Program is seeing an unexpected variation of clients that typically do not utilize these types of food security programs;
- The St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church food hub grant application remains under review. If the requested amount is approved, it will fund the program into 2021;
- The Lookout and Lower Mainland Purpose Society Sandwich Program will end on July 10, 2020; however, the Purpose Society will continue providing food through the health van and St. Vincent de Paul will continue their Friday Supper Program;
- As the Lower Mainland Purpose Society hamper program cycle ended on June 30, 2020, patrons are asked to re register for the Program so that needs can be assessed and continue to inform the current cycle of the Program which began on July 1 and will run until the end of August 2020. Hampers will be delivered every two weeks in order to reach a greater number of people; however, they can be picked up at the Purpose Society on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.

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

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, shared that Viveca Ellis, the Interim Community Organizer and Leadership Development Coordinator at the BCPRC, will participate in an information session for faith and non-profit organizations to outline the CAN Training Program, and that next steps include holding a participant information session on September 18, 2020, which staff hope to facilitate in person with physical distancing in effect and commencement of the Program in mid-October for approximately eight weeks.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that the goal is to have 15 participants take part in these empowering training sessions to learn about advocacy for themselves and their communities, civic committee structure, etc.

In response to questions from Task Force members, Mr. Stark advised:

- Participants should complete the full eight weeks of training in order to graduate from the Program;
- Graduates may become involved in City committees and mentor and/or train staff on how to engage those with lived and living experience;
- While participant criteria was initially for those with lived experience in poverty, it can be broadened to include those with lived experience in settlement issues, food insecurity, and homelessness within the last five years and, possibly, those active in their drug use. It was noted that participants must be reachable throughout the training sessions so they can be contacted outside of the classes if needed; and,
- A FAQ sheet will be created for those unable to attend the information sessions.

6. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that Mazarine Lodge, a modular housing development in Queensborough which is being operated by the Elizabeth Fry Society, is scheduled to open on July 20, 2020. The Lodge offers 40+ self-contained housing units, communal areas, and two meals a day for residents. Mr. Stark shared that if the available spaces cannot be filled by women currently located in New Westminster, they will be made available to those outside of the city.

Mr. Stark advised that the School District will not be renewing the agreement for the Emergency Response Centre (ERC) at the Massey Complex which expires on July 11, 2020. This decision was based on the unanticipated resumption of school, including summer classes, along with the need for student access to the Massey Gym, as the new secondary school will not be operational until January 2021. As a result, the City and BC Housing are seeking an alternate site for the ERC which must be able to

accommodate 30 to 50 people, preferably in the Downtown area for a period of approximately 12 to 18 months to provide longer term, stable, supportive housing as opposed to solely emergency housing. It is hoped that the location for the longer term housing will be secured by the end of August and, in the meantime, clients will be housed at the Mazarine Lodge, the Cliff Block, and the Russell Housing Centre and will relocate to the longer-term facility when appropriate.

In response to questions from Task Force members, Mr. Stark advised:

- The Cliff Block, an extreme weather response space, is not typically available at this time of year and is temporary;
- Supportive housing for men must now be considered as it is already provided for women;
- The longer-term housing is hoped to have self-contained units to encourage and facilitate client independence while remaining supportive; and,
- The pods from the ERC will be used at the Cliff Block, the Russell Housing Centre, and elsewhere, and those not being used will be placed in storage until they are needed again.

7. Interdepartmental Working Group on the Overdose Epidemic

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, announced the creation of the Interdepartmental Working Group on the Overdose Epidemic in response to Council directives from 2019 to address the overdose epidemic. She shared that the mandate of the Working Group is to coordinate City actions to respond to the overdose epidemic in New Westminster, including reviewing current actions, seeking opportunities for collaboration with other community partners and senior levels of government, updating related plans and policies, as well as developing a City Overdose Response Action Plan.

Ms. Freire shared that the New Westminster Overdose Community Action Team (NWOCAT), which is chaired by the Lower Mainland Purpose Society and the Fraser Health Authority, is leading in the area of overdose responses and, as such, staff recognize the need to collaborate with NWOCAT. She noted that the Working Group has met two times and are initially focusing on reviewing actions currently underway, and that a report will be going to Council on July 13, 2020 to provide an update and overview of City actions and NWOCAT. The report will be shared with the Task Force once the Council agenda is published.

8. Identification of Other Issues

No comments were received.

9. Member Updates

Staff Updates

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, advised that staff continue to work on the non-profit environmental scan initiative.

Member Updates

- Kimiko Karpoff, United Church of Canada, Good Vibrations, advised that she continues working online with healing circles, with the people at St. Barnabas Anglican Church and various other agencies' staff that need extra support with energy and resiliency. Ms. Karpoff invited members to contact her if their organization is interested in having a workshop, etc., as grant funding is still available as a result of the pandemic, and noted that Good Vibrations has received additional and increased grant funding this year;
- Ms. Karpoff shared that the Food Cupboard, run out of St. Barnabas Anglican Church on Fridays, has non-perishable food for those in need of it;
- Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, reminded the group of Vancouver Infectious Disease Centre's outreach clinic which will launch next week and take place every Wednesday from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Purpose Society to provide clean up care, various testing, substance abuse support, etc.; and,
- Melody Monro, Fraser Health Authority, advised that the COVID-19 virus outbreak at the Burnaby Warming Centre is over and the centre is now closed.

In response to a Task Force member's query regarding extreme heat protocol, John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, responded that staff are looking at how the needs of the unsheltered can be addressed and that Century House will be used as a cooling centre for those 50 years of age or older. Information will be shared with respect to where people can go to cool off, locations of hydration stations, etc.

10. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that staff will remain available over the summer to provide assistance and noted that the next Task Force meeting will be at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 5, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 1:58 p.m.

Original Signed _____
John Stark
Chair

Original Signed _____
Carilyn Cook
Committee Clerk