

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

## **Minutes**

**June 24, 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  
Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner  
Dylan Myers, Acting Emergency Support Services (ESS) Chief Deputy  
Mike Antoniali, Acting ESS Operations Coordinator  
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk

**PRESENT (via Teleconference):**

***Staff:***

Paolo Zenone, Recreation Leader, Youth Services  
Camille Oliveira, Constable, New Westminister Police Department  
Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Centennial Community Centre  
Karen Campbell, Policy Planner  
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst

***Organizational Representatives:***

Linda Fletcher-Gordon, Lower Mainland Purpose Society  
Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society  
Betina Wheeler, New West Homelessness Coalition Society  
Melody Monro, Fraser Health  
Melita Caissie, Fraserside Community Services Society  
Rick Bloudell, School District #40  
Fay Duxbury, New West Family Place  
Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral  
Dana Osiowy, New West Family Place  
Leonard, Lookout Housing and Health Society  
Esther Hsieh, Umbrella Multicultural Health Co-op

**GUEST (via Teleconference):**

Shane O’Hanlon, Sustainability Consultant, Stantec

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 10, 2020**

### *Task Force Web Portal Updates*

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Analyst, reminded members to check the web portal regularly as it is continuously updated. He shared that the portal can be found on the City's website under both the Task Force and Community Resources web portals and noted that the Key Information and Resources for Tenants document will be updated this week to include the June 19<sup>th</sup> Provincial Government announcement of next steps in support of tenants, including the extension of the temporary rent supplement to the end of August 2020.

### *Youth Services*

Paolo Zenone, Recreation Leader, Youth Services, provided the following updates:

- The Youth Community Resources Page has been updated; however, Spirit of the Children Society information is yet to be received for addition to the Page; and,
- Next week, Youth Services will start holding pop up, drop in youth programs throughout the community utilizing the City's outdoor resources, as well as offering a number of online challenges with a DJ'd party in the park to kick things off.

## **4. Indicative Community Resilience Assessment – Shane O'Hanlon**

Shane O'Hanlon, Sustainability Consultant, Stantec, introduced himself and informed the Task Force that he is currently working on a project with the City's utilities team, part of which includes addressing the supply and distribution of drinking water in the city in the event of an emergency, such as an earthquake. As such, a review of the community's current preparedness, including for the unsheltered and vulnerable population, will be undertaken in order to create an indicative community resilience assessment to address gaps and ensure access to water in an emergency event. Mr. O'Hanlon stated that the information will advise Council on how an emergency event scenario would play out with respect to access to the city's drinking water, noting that the first steps will be to survey the city's existing networks such as the Task Force in effort to determine where the gaps may be, for example, what the community believes can be done versus what can actually be done. Task Force members were invited to

ask questions or make suggestions regarding the engagement process; however, no comments were received.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of nurturing strong ties between the faith and non-profit sector and the Emergency Operations Centre, and advised that once developed, the response plan should be able to meet needs as they arise.

Mr. O'Hanlon shared that it will be noted in the report to Council that the information received represents a percentage of those in the community, acknowledging that those who are not comfortable with technology may be unable to complete the survey.

Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, confirmed that she has approximately 130 non-profit, local business, etc., contacts with whom she will be able to share the survey.

Mr. Stark confirmed that staff would share the survey with this Task Force, the Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Task Force, the Homelessness Coalition Society, the Welcoming and Inclusive New West Local Immigration Partnership Council, as well as Kids New West and the Community Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee.

## **5. Food Security Plans Update**

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

- A new hamper program is starting in Queensborough this Saturday at the Holy Spirit Catholic Church from 1:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. With the introduction of this new program, the hamper program at St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church will run from 12:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. and at Knox Presbyterian Church from 1:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. in order to facilitate distributing the food to the different sites;
- Members were reminded of the possible revision of the Food Resources Calendar which displays food security programs by neighbourhood, in effort to allow people to more easily be aware of programs in their vicinity and alleviate the need to travel elsewhere. Task Force members were encouraged to provide feedback on the new format to staff;
- The Lookout and Purpose Society Sandwich Program will continue until July 10<sup>th</sup> with food security options being explored beyond that date;
- The City and Greater Vancouver Food Bank's Hamper Program has been extended until the end of July with dates changing to accommodate Canada Day on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Hampers will now be provided on Thursday, July 2<sup>nd</sup> and Thursday, July 9<sup>th</sup>. It was noted that this Program will be assessed on an month to month basis; and,

- The Food Bank has moved from Tipperary Park to the Moody Park Arena to avoid the summer heat for seniors, etc.

In response to a Task Force member's request, Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, advised that each of the food security programs is tracking their number of users; however, they may not discern those that are accessing more than one program. Ms. Freire will work with Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, to determine the number of people currently accessing programs compared to prior to the pandemic to determine if the supply of food is increasing or decreasing and if needs are being met.

The Venerable Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral, stated that while more meals are being provided, collateral losses of the pandemic include things such as the social amenity of being able to sit down and eat, etc., leading to a loss of social connectedness and other equally important needs that must be met.

## **6. Partnership with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition (BCPRC) on Community Action Network Training Sessions**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, provided a recap of the 2019 partnership that the City forged with the BCPRC for Community Action Network Training Sessions which would involve up to 15 people with lived experience taking part in six to seven training sessions during which they would learn about advocacy for themselves and their communities, public speaking, civic governance, decision-making, etc. Mr. Stark shared that an engagement toolkit will be created to better connect with those with lived experience, as well as having participants train staff and provide insight into the City's engagement to ensure that the consultation and engagement process is inclusive. The Legislative Services Department will also be included to see where graduates can contribute with respect to civic committees and task forces. The first information session will be held for faith and non-profit organizations so they can determine if there is anyone they can refer to the program, with the second session being for participants of the program. Training sessions are anticipated to begin in October, with physical distancing in place.

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

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that the Emergency Response Centre (ERC) which opened on May 11<sup>th</sup> with licensing agreement with the School District for a two month period, is coming to an end. As the School District is not looking to renew the agreement, the City and BC Housing are researching alternate sites for the ERC which must be able to accommodate 40 to 50 people, preferably in the Downtown area for a period of approximately 12 to 18 months in order to provide longer term supportive housing as opposed to solely emergency shelter.

Mr. Stark also provided an update on the 44-unit modular housing development in Queensborough which is being run by the Elizabeth Fry Society, sharing that occupancy is anticipated to begin in mid to late July. It was noted that the development will provide supportive housing for 10 years with an option to renew for another 10 years. Task Force members were invited to share the information with anyone who may be in need of supportive housing and who meet the prerequisites. Further information will be included in the post meeting information email.

## **8. Extreme Heat Preparation**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that the City will open up a cooling centre at Century House for those 50+ years of age during extreme heat events and acknowledged that preparations also need to be made for the unsheltered population to ensure that they also have a place to cool off and stay hydrated. Staff will send an email out to Task Force members seeking feedback on possible cooling centre locations (especially in the Downtown area) and how to keep the city's unsheltered residents hydrated (water bottles, hydrating stations), maps of where they can seek shelter and hydration, etc.

## **9. Identification of Other Issues**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, informed members that 170 overdose deaths were recorded in British Columbia for the month of May and that a staff report will be going to Council on July 13<sup>th</sup> with respect to overdose prevention, the Overdose Prevention Working Group, the Community Action Team, and to seek further direction from Council regarding an overdose prevention site in the City and work with Fraser Health on a safe drug supply.

In response to the Venerable Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral's concern regarding human waste around the Cathedral due to the lack of washrooms, Mr. Stark shared that funding is no longer available for temporary washrooms, that the rental company advised of challenges servicing and maintaining the washrooms, and that the Uptown BIA has asked Council for a permanent facility be made available to the vulnerable and unsheltered population in the area. He assured Task Force members that staff continue to work on addressing this issue.

## **10. Member Updates**

### *Staff Updates*

Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, shared that since the Federal Government has not yet announced recipients of the Reaching Home funding, a message is going to Ottawa that the Government must move faster on this decision which so many organizations rely on.

## *Member Updates*

- Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society announced that the Vancouver Infectious Disease Centre will be setting up an outreach clinic at the Purpose Society starting on July 15<sup>th</sup> every Wednesday from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. for HIV, HPV, and COVID-19 antibody testing with nurse practitioners and a physician also being available to assist those with substance abuse issues; and,
- Rick Bloudell, School District #40, advised that currently there is an optional return to school with the goal being to continuously increase density, moving towards a full reopening of the schools. He shared that surveys have been sent home to parents to share their feedback on the return to school, noting that decisions related to the September return to school will be made around the middle of August.

## **11. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule**

Mr. Stark reminded members that the Task Force will be meeting less during July and August and may move back to biweekly meeting schedule once summer is over.

The next meeting of the Task Force will be at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 8, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Original Signed  
**John Stark**  
**Chair**

Original Signed  
**Carilyn Cook**  
**Committee Clerk**