

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

Minutes

October 14, 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
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk

PRESENT (via Teleconference):

Staff:

Karen Campbell, Policy Planner
Constable Camille Oliveira, New Westminster Police Department
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst

Organizational Representatives:

Rick Bloudell, School District #40
Erin Daly, Fraser Health Authority
Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral

Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society
Patricia Steiner, Family Services of Greater Vancouver
Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society

The meeting convened at 1:02 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 September 30, 2020

Task Force Web Portal Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised that staff continue to update the Task Force Web Portal which contains important COVID-19 related resource information including key documents such as the Food Resources Calendar, the Survival Resources Guide, Key Information and Resources for Tenants, the List of Financial Resources, etc.

Financial Resources Update

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, shared that the List of Financial Supports will be updated this week and noted that the main updates include the conclusion of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the introduction of the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB), the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB), and the Canada Recovery Caregiver Benefit (CRCB).

Tenant Resources Update

Karen Campbell, Policy Planner, advised that there are minimal updates since the last meeting and reminded members that the moratorium on evictions has ended with overdue rent due to be paid by July 2021 or tenants may face eviction. Staff will continue to monitor for updates to Key Information and Resources for Tenants.

Youth Services Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, on behalf of Paolo Zenone, Recreation Leader, advised that on Friday, October 30, 2020, the Youth Centre will be hosting the *Moody Park After Dark* Halloween event with New Westminster Fire & Rescue Services, which will include a fire and various games with prizes. He shared that the Youth Centre, which is seeing an increase in visitors, continues to hold online and in-person counselling sessions.

Other Updates

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that, as requested by a Task Force member, the link to the Task Force Web Portal will be shared in the New Westminster Record and on CitiPage. As well, the Communications Department will be requested to ensure a more easily accessible link to the Web Portal on the City's website and investigate printing resource information for dissemination.

4. Food Security Plans Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, and Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, shared food security plan updates including:

- As the various food programs are reliant on foundation funding which will end soon, longer term, sustainable funding may be found under the Federal Government's Reaching Home initiative, which may also facilitate the expansion of food security resources to include clothing exchanges, information and referral, etc. Additionally, staff will follow up with the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction regarding the City's proposed Food Security Pilot Project;
- The United Way of the Lower Mainland has released a second round of funding wherein organizations may apply for up to \$35,000. Applications are being accepted now, with the funds being released by December 2020;
- The Vancouver Foundation also received additional funds from the Federal Government; however, there have been no announcements about it as they may be addressing the backlog of applications received for the previous funding;
- A surge in the need for food programs throughout the city has been noted with over 155 food hampers given out on Saturday alone, and numbers are expected to increase even further with the recent change to government benefits; and,
- The Lower Mainland Purpose Society continues its programs through the Health Van, etc.

Other Program Updates

Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, announced that this is Homelessness Action Week with the focus being on promoting meal programs, including giveaways such as care kits, and that various immunization and dental clinics will be held as well.

5. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded members that the Emergency Response Centre (ERC), which was housed at the Massey Complex for approximately three months, was unable to remain at that location due to the resumption of school and the new high school not yet being complete. He shared that none of the seven possible shelter sites investigated by the City and BC Housing were appropriate as they did not offer 40 plus spaces, were not ideally located, and/or have lease issues. He assured members that finding an appropriate ERC location continues to be a priority for the City and BC Housing as existing shelters continue with physical distancing measures which reduces the number of people they can accommodate.

Mr. Stark announced that the City and BC Housing have identified a possible supportive housing location and are hoping to develop up to 50 supportive housing units on the site. Further information will be shared with members when appropriate.

Mr. Stark shared that the Federal Government has a new Rapid Housing Initiative for which the City has identified three potential sites. Staff are currently seeking seed funding to complete due diligence of the sites regarding required upgrades to facilitate occupancy, etc.

6. Interdepartmental Working Group on the Overdose Epidemic

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, shared that the Fraser Health Authority (FHA) provided a presentation at the October 5, 2020 Council meeting regarding an Overdose Prevention Site and a Safe Supply Program. He advised that the FHA is seeking an operator for the Health Contact Centre which would house the Overdose Prevention Site and other harm reduction services, noting that, depending on the location, an expedited development approvals process may be necessary.

7. Community Action Network (CAN) Training Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared that the first of seven CAN training sessions has taken place and reminded members that training will include systemic realities, public speaking, advocacy, City committee structure, etc. He advised that the 10 participants have a variety of experiences and backgrounds and are excited to return for the upcoming sessions.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, stated that it is hoped that graduates will sit on advisory committees, inform an engagement toolkit, and train staff on how to better engage community members with lived and living experience. A report will be going to Council regarding compensation, child care reimbursement, transit passes, etc., for those who sit on an advisory committee with lived or living experience, as they are seen as subject matter experts.

Discussion ensued regarding support/mentorship for participants in order to provide them with additional of guidance throughout the sessions. Staff will investigate if follow up is provided by the facilitator or if it may be done another way.

8. Identification of Other Issues

- In response to the noted increase in aggressiveness from some of the unsheltered population who appear to have moved to the city from surrounding municipalities, John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, will work with Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, on the possibility of holding a de-escalation workshop, or providing other pro-active measures. The Venerable

Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral, offered space at the Cathedral for a workshop and Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, advised that training may be facilitated through the New Westminster Overdose Community Action Team (NWOCAT);

- Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, addressed the impact of the pandemic on mental health and shared a link to virtual mental health supports. It was noted that the weekly emails also include information and links to various mental health resources; and,
- Mr. Stark acknowledged the need for additional shelter capacity, a challenge faced by most cities, especially with the need to keep people physically distanced. Staff will continue, along with BC Housing, to seek appropriate shelter space noting that additional challenges include ensuring the housing is appropriately staffed.

9. Member Updates

Staff Updates

Constable Camille Oliveira, New Westminster Police Department (NYPD), announced that the NYPD has partnered with the Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB) to host a virtual and drive through food drive on Saturday, November 21, 2020.

External Member Updates

- The Venerable Richard Leggett advised that the New Westminster Ministerial Association is requesting that the City provide a seat for them on the Affordable Housing and Child Care Advisory Committee;
- Patricia Steiner, Family Services of Greater Vancouver, shared that they are working on their Caring Neighbours Program. She will forward information to Task Force members; and,
- Staff will look into sharing Christmas resource information with members as service agencies are already seeing an increase in those requiring assistance.

10. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, thanked members for their input and advised that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 28, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Original Signed
John Stark
Chair

Original Signed
Carilyn Cook
Committee Clerk