

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

**May 13, 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)*

### **MINUTES**

#### **PRESENT (in Person):**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning/Chair  
Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, Seniors Services  
Mike Antoniali, Acting ESS Operations Coordinator  
Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst  
Dylan Myers, Acting Emergency Support Services (ESS) Chief Deputy  
Heather Corbett, Committee Clerk

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

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

Silisha Ali, Youth Program Coordinator  
Karen Campbell, Policy Planner  
Shelley Cole, Bylaw Officer, Tenant Support Coordinator  
Nazanin Esmaeili, Planning Assistant  
Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner  
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst  
Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Centennial Community Centre  
Camille Oliveira, Constable, New Westminster Police Department  
Ryan Weber, Program Coordinator, Queensborough Community Centre

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

Rick Bloudell, School District #40  
Linda Fletcher-Gordon, Lower Mainland Purpose Society  
Sukhdeep Jassar, Fraser Health  
Allison Luke, New West Mental Health and Addictions Centre  
Carol Neilson, Holy Trinity  
Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society  
Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction  
Edith Tazumi, Union Gospel Mission  
Lorrie Wasyliw, Monarch Place (WINGS)  
Betina Wheeler, New West Homelessness Coalition Society  
Keefer Pelech, Ministry of Mental Health, Judy Darcy's Office

The meeting was called to order 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 May 6, 2020**

### *Tenant Support Resources*

Karen Campbell, Policy Planner, shared that the tenant resource document would be available on the City's website today and would also be distributed to the New West Tenants' Union. Additionally, a listing of tenant resources would be published in the New Westminster Record.

Ms. Campbell also noted that the City will continue to monitor any changes to the Provincially-declared State of Emergency, and the impacts this could have on tenants. To this end, a multi-municipality meeting was held recently, with the intention of connecting staff working on tenant initiatives across the region, share resources and discuss emerging issues during recovery.

### *Youth Services*

Ryan Weber, Program Coordinator, shared the following updates:

- A public document with resources that relate to youth has been developed and posted at the youth centre;
- Staff have connected with School District 40 to start planning ideas on how to connect with youth;
- Staff have planned a process to connect with youth through Instagram, and to promote in-person activities that will be in line with Provincial regulations; and,
- Enhanced counselling resources for youth will be available shortly, once a new counsellor starts on May 28.

### *Financial support*

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, advised that three new tax filing clinics are available, and the resources would be updated on the financial support sheet.

### *Information dissemination*

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst noted that a staff report presented to City Council at the May 11 meeting had highlighted the resources that had been made available to support at-risk and vulnerable populations, and it was recommended that the document be made accessible in as many areas as possible. A recommendation had also been made for staff to partner with Douglas College and the Lower Mainland Purpose Society to make resources more inclusive for those who do not have Internet access.

### Task Force Bulletin

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, noted that a request had been made to condense the amount of information that was available, and therefore a three-to-four page bulletin is being developed to consolidate, discuss and share important items in one place.

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

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, and John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, shared food security plan updates including:

- The Vancouver Foundation was recognized for two grants worth \$82,500 that were awarded to St. Barnabas and St. Aidan's Churches and will provide two 12-week food hamper programs;
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- City staff are starting to develop a proposal for funding of a food security pilot which would build on the food security programs that have been developed during the pandemic, and the City's Food Security Action Plan, with the goal of empowering organizations to encourage the sustainability of food security;
- Staff are considering applying for a grant from senior levels of government to fund a coordinator position from within the non-profit sector to continue the coordination of food service programs within the City, for four-to-16 months, along with food and supplies;
- An e-mail was recently received asking if there are resources available to supply buggies to carry groceries for those with reduced mobility – this may be an area for the Task Force members to investigate further; and,
- Courtney Pankratz reviewed the hampers that are currently being distributed on a weekly basis in the City.

Task Force members made the following comments:

- Holy Trinity is seeking volunteers, and investigating a potential Saturday brunch program, as this appears to be a gap in the schedule, and likely a time that people would be able to help;
- The St. Aidan's program will be different in that the food will be brought in from other sources, and more protein would be included. They are also looking at a drive-up program;
- Some programs, such as 4:00 pm Union Gospel Mission meal program, may not be operational on the upcoming holiday Monday;

## **5. Emergency Response Centre (ERC) at the Massey Complex**

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, informed members that the Massey Complex had been chosen to be used as an Emergency Response Centre (ERC), noting the following details:

- The ERC is set up in the large gym, with capacity for 40 individuals with physical distancing, and the space is partitioned from the Theatre;
- Some issues with the facility are that it is not owned by the City, Massey Theatre is still being used, and the Ministry of Education has announced some return to school in May;
- A license agreement has been developed between Fraser Health, Lookout Society, School District 40 and the City;
- The facility became operational on May 11, and as of May 12, 12 individuals (11 men and one woman) are being housed;
- There is a maximum of five placements per day, up to a maximum capacity of 40;
- Some concerns have been raised by local residents in response to a newspaper article in the Record;
- The living arrangements include 40 pods with a bed, nightstand, and partition in each, three meals per day, TV, WIFI, 24/7 staffing, security, a smoking area, a storage area, washrooms, showers, and an overdose prevention space;
- Consideration is being given to a safe drug supply;
- The referral process for the ERC is through Fraser Health, where individuals would be screened for COVID, and if positive, would be transferred to a self-isolation location outside of the City; and,
- A stakeholder meeting occurs daily, and any important or time sensitive information will be sent out to Task Force members.

Task Force members noted that a link containing information about how to refer potential ERC candidates to Fraser Health would be useful.

## **6. Digital Inclusion and Connection Survey**

John Stark, noted that City staff would be sending out two surveys in the coming weeks, as follows:

- In relation to a partnership between Douglas College and the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, which is looking at giving electronic devices, including smart phone and tablets, to unsheltered individuals, a two-page survey will be sent out to get a sense about computer and WI-FI access being offered both before and during the pandemic, and to collect any suggestions about the goals of the partnership; and,
- A second survey will be sent out to non-profit and faith-based organizations with regards to projected post-pandemic recovery needs. This would be to make the case for funding to foundations and the senior levels of governments, given that needs have been identified and donations are down.

## **7. City of New Westminster Overdose Prevention Inter-Departmental Working Group**

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, noted that in late-2019, the City had formed an inter-Departmental working group to coordinate actions with regards to the opioid epidemic, which was tasked with developing an action plan for the City so that all Departments are aware of what each other is doing, and to coordinate actions with the New Westminster Overdose Community Action Team (NWOCAT).

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, mentioned that the ERC will have an overdose prevention space and could retain prescribing physicians with regards to safe drug supply. Mr. Stark further noted that there is interest from City Council in regards to exploring the provision of a community-based overdose prevention site.

Courtney Pankratz, Coordinator, New Westminster Overdose Community Action Team (NWOCAT), provided some background into the initiatives that they have been involved with in the community, including a peer mentorship program, an anti-stigma campaign and a pilot project to increase capacity in response to the overdose crisis.

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

None identified

## **8. Member Updates**

### *Staff Updates*

- Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Centennial Community Centre, noted that Kids New West is working on resource bags to give to vulnerable families, and if there are any suggestions from the Task Force, to pass them along; and,
- Further information about the bags and their distribution will be provided at the next Taskforce meeting.

*External Member Updates*

Rick Bloudell, School District 40:

- There are presently six school age care programs in School District 40 who are accommodating children of first responders and vulnerable students;
- School District 40 is currently planning to introduce a part-time optional return for students who need it, incorporating physical distancing;
- Summer programming is also being planned for vulnerable, low-income families;
- There are currently in the range of 100 students who are taking advantage of the breakfast program and Save-On Foods vouchers that are being offered out of the Pearson wing of New Westminster Secondary School.

Carol Neilson, Holy Trinity Cathedral

- Cones would be needed to ensure physical distancing for the lunch program at the Cathedral.

**Action:** Dylan Myers was tasked with follow-up.

Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

- Through the homelessness action community program, 7/11 and SPARC of BC, 3,500 smart phones (including \$10 pre-paid credit and wireless capability) are being distributed to vulnerable people in the Metro Vancouver region

**Action:** Tristan Johnson was tasked to follow up, as this would help with the partnership between Douglas College and the Lower Mainland Lookout Society.

## 9. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

John Stark noted that the meeting schedule has been changed in order to allow for more time between meetings and to alternate with the Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Task Force meetings.

The next meeting of the Task Force will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 27, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 2:04 p.m.

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

Original Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
**Heather Corbett**  
**Committee Clerk**