

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

Minutes

April 8, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.
Room 401, Anvil Centre

(In order to undertake precautionary health measures and practice safe social distancing, only City staff are permitted to attend the meeting in person.)

PRESENT (in Person):

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning/Chair
Mike Antoniali, Acting Emergency Services Support Operations Coordinator
Rob Dick, Assistant Deputy Fire Chief
Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst
Dylan Myers, Acting Emergency Support Services (ESS) Chief Deputy

PRESENT (via Teleconference):

Staff and Consultant

Karen Campbell, Planner
Shelley Cole, Bylaw Officer
Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner
Diana McDaniel, Inspector, New Westminister Police Department
Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Centennial Community Centre
Camille Oliveira, Constable, New Westminister Police Department
Courtney Pankratz, Consultant to the Task Force
Ryan Webber, Program Coordinator Queensborough Community Centre

Organizational Representatives

Linda Fletcher-Gordon, Lower Mainland Purpose Society for Youth and Families
Esther Hsieh, Umbrella Multicultural Health Co-op
Sukhdeep Jassar, Fraser Health Authority
Kimiko Karpoff, United Church of Canada
Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral
Leonard Levy, Lookout Housing and Health Society
Bonnie Moriarty, Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver
Kyoko Takahashi, Seniors Services Society
Lorrie Wasyliw, Monarch Place (WINGS)
Betina Wheeler, New Westminister Homelessness Coalition Society
Bill Wong, Union Gospel Mission

The meeting convened at 1:02 p.m.

1. Introductions

Task Force members introduced themselves.

2. Review of Draft Minutes

John Stark spoke to the purpose and form of the meeting minutes and noted that they were a summary and not verbatim. No comments were received.

3. Update on Actions Taken Since Meeting of April 1, 2020

Staff provided the following updates:

- **Task Force Web Portals:** Claudia Freire provided an update on the web portals for both the At Risk and Vulnerable Populations and the Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Task Forces and noted that they are now live and contain links to various programs and resources. She noted the need for regular updates to the information and reminded faith and non-profit organizations to share any changes related to their programming and services.
- **Resource Request Form:** Anur Mehdic stated that an electronic and interactive request form has been developed which employs a Google platform. He noted that faith and non-profit organizations should complete the form in order to obtain resources needed to assist their clients and guests. John Stark reiterated the importance of completing the form and noted that every effort will be made to fulfill the request but some items, such as personal protective equipment, is in very short supply. Dylan Myers provided an example of how the request form has been successfully used and noted that it enables the City to possibly be reimbursed from the Province.
- **Survival Guide and Food Calendar:** Anur Mehdic described the two documents and emphasized the importance of receiving updates from faith and non-profit organizations in order to keep them current. He also described the COVID-19 List of Financial Supports, which lists financial assistance and government benefits and will be managed by the City's Senior Planning Analyst.
- **Key Contacts List:** Anur Mehdic requested that task force members keep him updated in regards to any changes to key contacts for participating organizations.

4. Food Security Plans Update

Claudia Freire provided an update on a supper program which will be offered twice weekly in the parking lot at Century House and a program to deliver bagged food products to older seniors and persons with disabilities that cannot or do not want to risk their health accessing the food bank at Tipperary Park. Courtney Pankratz

discussed the food security needs being seen in New Westminster, as well as the preparation of food security plans and identification of needs by neighbourhood. She described potential food delivery models, including the mobile food service offered by the Purpose Health Van.

Dylan Myers gave an update on the hot meal program at the Salvation Army on Mondays. John Stark discussed the important role of partnerships between the City, faith and non-profit organizations, and local businesses in addressing the food security needs of at-risk and vulnerable populations. Based on the discussion that ensued, the following updates were provided:

- John Stark, Dylan Myers and Betina Wheeler provided an update on the food program at Saint Barnabas Baptist Church. Ms. Wheeler will follow-up with church with regards to meeting their resource needs.
- Linda Fletcher-Gordon provided an update about a food program to meet the needs of the students (and families of the students) that attend Purpose Independent Secondary School.
- Betina Wheeler provided an update on the Greater Vancouver Food Bank and their eligibility and registration requirements, noting that they have relaxed both for the duration of the pandemic.
- Betina Wheeler described a best practice on the North Shore, in which pylons are used to denote physical distancing requirements at food distribution programs, which has been a challenge at various local programs.

Anur Mehdic provided an update from School District #40 in regards to meal programs and financial assistance for families who are food insecure.

5. Shelter and Temporary Housing Needs

John Stark discussed the ongoing work between the City, BC Housing and the Fraser Health Authority to identify shelter sites for the street entrenched, including a site or sites for self-isolation when someone is symptomatic or tests positive but does not require hospitalization. He noted that BC Housing did a survey of faith and non-profit organizations serving the homeless and found that there are about 50 unsheltered and street entrenched individuals in New Westminster. He also noted that the Extreme Weather Response Program at the Cliff Block will operate beyond March 31 and will be operational 24/7.

Based on the discussion that ensued, the following additional updates were provided:

- Lorrie Wasyliw provided an update on the possible use of hotel rooms to house women (and children) fleeing partner abuse, with John Stark providing further updates on this item, as well as on families facing homelessness. He noted that

City staff have received direction from Council to work with BC Housing to ensure that the needs of women and children are being met.

- Bonnie Moriarty and John Stark discussed the need for women to have separate shelter spaces from men for comfort and safety purposes.
- Concerns were expressed about homeless encampments and loitering, particularly in the vicinity of unoccupied buildings as a result of the pandemic, including businesses and churches. Shelley Cole provided information on the protocol to address these concerns, including the installation of portable toilets throughout the city. John Stark referenced the importance of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design and Camille Oliveira offered to meet with concerned parties to discuss their issues and possible solutions.

6. Identification of Other Issues

John Stark stated that information is being sent out by the City to rental buildings to inform landlords and tenants about recent provincial changes to eviction regulations.

Bonnie Moriarty identified challenges faced by people in accessing services given transit reductions and concerns about risk related to transit use. John Stark discussed the use of neighbourhood distribution centres and mobile vans to meet the needs of people in different neighbourhoods facing these challenges.

Kimiko Karpoff identified challenges faced by single parents with children who are unable to attend food programs due to health concerns. John Stark and Linda Fletcher-Gordon discussed some solutions to this challenge, including the resumption of school-based meal programs by the School District and the offer by the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society to bag food products and have City staff distribute them. Although a pilot at this time, it could potentially be scaled-up.

John Stark discussed the difficulties for street entrenched people accessing showers and laundry facilities, and stated that these are areas that need to be addressed moving forward.

7. Member Updates

Member updates included but were not limited to:

- Bill Wong provided an update on the number of people served by the Union Gospel Mission, the changing demographics of the people being served, and their meal programs that will operate during the Easter Weekend.
- Lorrie Wasyliw provided an update on the counselling services offered by WINGS, including on-line, pro-bono counselling.

- Bonnie Moriarty provided an update on the Elizabeth Fry Society and the rooms they are using at the Inn at the Quay. She suggested that this may be an option for WINGS in meeting the needs of women and children fleeing abuse.
- Courtney Pankratz provided an update on the Lower Mainland Purpose Society and the New Westminster Overdose Community Action Team’s peer leadership program.
- Ryan Weber provided an update from Parks and Recreation in regards to the availability of the washrooms at the Queensborough Community Centre, and asked for feedback from task force members about demand.
- Esther Hsieh provided an update from Umbrella Multicultural Health Co-op and their culturally sensitive training on how to assist people in accessing the COVID-19 online assessment tool.
- Rob Dick from the New Westminster Fire Department requested that City staff on the At Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force provide a photo of themselves to him to create identification tags.

8. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

The next meeting is at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 15, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 2:27 p.m.

Original Signed

John Stark
Chair

Original Signed

Tristan Johnson
Senior Planning Analyst