



Corporation of the City of
NEW WESTMINSTER

**Joint Meeting of the:
COVID-19: AT-RISK &
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS TASK FORCE
&
COVID-19: SENIORS & PERSONS LIVING
WITH DISABILITIES TASK FORCE
Minutes**

**November 10, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.
Meeting Held Electronically**

PRESENT

Staff:

John Stark, Co-Chair/Supervisor, Community Planning
Jay Young, Co-Chair/Manager, Recreation Services
Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, Development Services
Camille Oliveira, New Westminster Police Department, Vulnerable Persons Liaison
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, Legislative Services

Organizational Representatives:

Rick Bloudell, SD 40
Melita Caissie, Fraserside Community Services Society
Erin Daly, Fraser Health
Laura Dunne, Westminster House Society
Fay Duxbury, New Westminster Family Place
Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Manor
Kay Johnson, New West Hospice Society
Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral
Lenard Levy, Lookout Housing and Health Society
Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Colleen Ray, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society
Karl San Ramon, Seniors Services Society
Travis Walker, Site Coordinator, Health Contact Centre
Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society
Jules Wilson, STADD, Ministry for Children and Family Development

Guests:

Brian Patterson, Urban Systems
Mitchell Reardon, Happy City, Urban Planning and Design Consultants

The meeting convened at 1:00 p.m. and John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, assumed the Chair.

1. Welcome, Land Acknowledgment and Roll Call

Mr. Stark welcomed everyone to the meeting and recognized that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsundered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples and acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. He recognized that, as a city, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on and that the City is working on a reconciliation framework which will be undertaken over the new few years.

Introductions and a roll call took place.

2. Joint Meeting Minutes

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded members that the minutes are not verbatim and capture key discussion points shared during the meetings.

Presentations

3. Engagement: Uptown Sixth Street Public Realm Improvements

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, introduced Mitchell Reardon of Happy City, Urban Planning and Design Consultants, and Brian Patterson of Urban Systems. Messrs. Reardon and Patterson provided a presentation regarding Uptown Sixth Street Public Realm Improvements which outlined the following:

- Project overview
- Timeline
- Key design features
- Intended outcomes
- Next steps

In response to questions from Task Force members, Mr. Mehdic and John Stark, Supervisory, Community Planning, provided the following comments:

- The pedestrian scramble could affect people who are dealing with dementia given the complexity of the design as it may make the space too busy for them. In addition, consideration needs to be made with respect to obstacles on the sidewalks which may also make getting around more challenging;
- Input received on the Belmont Street parklet will inform the planning of future parklets;
- As part of the Digital Inclusion Initiative, it is anticipated that free WiFi will be provided in the area; and,

- Additional waste receptacles and more frequent pick ups in the vicinity will addressed.

In response to a question from a Task Force member, Mr. Patterson advised that upgrading the Belmont Street and Sixth Street intersection will be looked at during a future phase of this work.

In response to Messrs. Reardon and Patterson's request for feedback from the Task Forces, members provided that following comments:

- Consideration should be made to creating space for reconciliation;
- The pedestrian scramble, especially if there are a lot of people in the intersection, may be confusing for some seniors and inhibit them from crossing the street;
- As the area is beautified, it should not cater to one demographic. The homeless and at-risk population must feel welcome in the neighbourhood;
- Publically accessible phone charging stations would be beneficial in the area;
- Those utilizing scooters and wheelchairs must be provided enough space to turn around; and,
- The design elements should consider the environment, be diverse and inclusive, offer wide walkways, and provide the opportunity for murals and artwork to allow folks to share different lived experiences;
- Shelters from the weather should be added.

Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, advised that "I's on the Street," a micro cleaning initiative that employs those with lived experience at a living wage, will visit the street in order to provide additional feedback to Happy City.

Joint Task Force Items

4. Update on Standing Items

Task Force Web Portal and Weekly Email Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, provided an update on the community resources web portal and weekly newsletter, noting that the web portal will be updated this week and includes such resource information as the List of Financial Supports, the Survival Resource Guide, the Food Resource Calendar, information on the Friendly Support Caller Program, and the COVID-19 Trusted Links and Resources List.

Mr. Mehdic reminded Task Force members that the weekly newsletter email, along with the information provided on the community resources web portal, also includes highlights of key Council and other reports, which may be of interest to Task Force

members, major funding opportunities and their deadlines, standing updates for grants and proposals, upcoming events, surveys, mental health resources, etc.

Task Force members were encouraged to forward relevant items of interest to Mr. Mehdic for inclusion in the weekly newsletter.

Financial Resources

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, noted that the November 8, 2021 updates to the List of Financial Supports includes:

- Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit and the Canada Recovery Caregiver Benefit have been extended to November 20, 2021 and may be extended further; and,
- A funding announcement for the At Home Program which provides medical equipment and respite assistance for children and youth with complex needs.

COVID-19 Updates

- COVID-19 infections in New Westminster have risen slightly from September to October 2021 with 216 but remains lower than most other Fraser Health areas;
- Ninety-two percent of those aged 12 years and older have received at least one dose of the vaccine and 89 percent have received two doses; and,
- The vaccination rate in the city generally remains higher than in most other areas.

Tenant Resources Update

Mr. Johnson noted that the Tenant Resource Guide was updated on November 10, 2021.

5. Food Security Planning Update

Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, provided the following updates on food security planning and related programs:

- The numbers of hampers going out has decreased down to previous levels after a concerning jump in November, going from 179 hampers being given out per week to 140;
- St. Barnabas Anglican Church is giving away 32 to 42 hampers every Wednesday, with two-thirds of the families receiving hampers being comprised of four people or more;
- The hamper program at St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church provided 22-24 hampers per week to people, along with 25 meals from their meal program; and,

- The Tuesday and Thursday meal program previously run out of Century House was successfully moved to the Legion Manor. The program currently provides 50 meals on those days, mostly to residents of the Legion Manor and Ross Tower.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that an inside location for the Queensborough “Don’t Go Hungry” program is being sought out in order to provide consistent hours for the program and shelter out of inclement weather.

6. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update

Extreme Weather Response Program

Mr. Stark advised that the Lower Mainland Purposed Society has applied for a Temporary Use Permit (TUP) for an extreme weather shelter at 502 Columbia Street (former Army and Navy Department Store) which will be considered by Council on Monday, November 15, 2021. The shelter has the potential to provide 24 hour, seven days a week shelter for the homeless, which would address an urgent need in the city. Mr. Stark noted that all emergency shelters in the city are now at capacity.

In response to a question from a Task Force member and what was required for the space to become an Emergency Response Shelter, Mr. Stark advised that there were still various building and fire safety related issues to address for the Extreme Weather Response Shelter and that additional upgrades would be required for it to transition to a full time shelter such as additional toilets, a shower trailer, etc. He noted that funding discussions with BC Housing were ongoing and that it would take time to ensure that the space would meet the requirements for a full time Emergency Response Centre.

Mr. Stark reported that the City received a Strengthening Community Services Program Grant of which \$127,000 was allocated to the ‘I’s on the Street’ Program.

Colleen Ray, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, shared that ‘I’s on the Street’ has been running in New Westminster for approximately 10 years in the Downtown area, currently funded by the Downtown Business Improvement Association, and that with additional funding, the Program will be able to run six days a week in the Downtown area, three days a week in the Uptown area, and two days a week in Sapperton. Ms. Ray advised that the Program recruits from the Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver, Lookout Housing and Health Society, and Fraserside Community Services Society to do micro street cleaning in three hour shifts, and that the Program is a stepping stone for clients to take them to other regular employment.

Supportive Housing Projects at 60 to 68 Sixth Street and 350 to 366 Fenton Street

Mr. Stark shared that there are now two Official Community Plan amendments and Rezoning to provide a total of 110 non-market and supportive housing units, 52 two

of which are proposed at 60 to 68 Sixth Street, with 58 of the units at 350 to 366 Fenton Street.

At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force Items

7. Health Contact Centre (Overdose Prevention Site) Update

Travis Walker, Site Coordinator, Health Contact Centre, shared that the Centre is open every day from 3:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. and offers supervised consumption of drugs, harm reduction supplies, naloxone kits and training, an outreach program which hands out supplies nightly, etc. Mr. Walker noted that visits to the Centre have risen significantly to 190 in October from previous numbers of 150-160, possibly due to the colder weather and people desirous of moving indoors; this has also meant an increase in supplies being handed out.

Mr. Walker announced that the Health Contact Centre now has a Fluorescence Detected Magnetic Resonance (FDMR) spectrometer drug tester which can test for a number of impurities in a drug supply. This service is offered from 1:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Monday to Friday, and it is hoped that once more are trained to run the machine and interpret the results, it will be available for use seven days a week.

In conclusion, Mr. Walker advised that there have been no overdose deaths at the Centre.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, announced that the City is working with the Lower Mainland Purpose Society to expand the hours of the Health Contact Centre to include the early morning hours and will reach out to Fraser Health for assistance.

8. Identification of Other Issues, and Suggestions to Assist At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations

Discussion ensued regarding flu vaccination clinics for the unsheltered and at-risk community and Task Force members made the following comments:

- Currently, flu vaccinations are only available through health units and pharmacies; however, it is noted that the unsheltered and precariously housed may not have a doctor or a phone to book an appointment and may not feel comfortable going into a pharmacy to get a vaccination. Erin Daly, Fraser Health will look into the possibility of vaccine clinics for the vulnerable population and report back to the Task Forces;
- It was noted that vaccination clinics were held during Homelessness Action Week and that an educational campaign regarding the importance of getting the flu shot would be beneficial;
- Holy Trinity Anglican Church would not be the only church that would be willing to organize a flu shot clinic, possibly during breakfast times; and,

- Staffing issues at Fraser Health could be the reason that flu clinics have not been offered thus far; however, it is recognized that there is a need for this in the community for those that have barriers.

Further discussion ensued and it was noted that the Food Resource Calendar needs to be updated to include closures for Remembrance Day, which is tomorrow and which opens up an even larger discussion of resources being closed on holidays.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reported that the City is updating the Survival Resources Guide to make it portable and provide the essential information.

9. Member Updates

Staff Updates

No updates were provided.

External Member Updates

The Venerable Richard Leggett announced that the Holy Trinity Cathedral would be open on Christmas Day and New Years Day for their Saturday Breakfast Program.

Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities Task Force Items

Procedural Note: Jay Young, Manager, Recreation Services, assumed the Chair.

10. Friendly Support Caller Program

Karl San Ramon, Seniors Services Society, reported that in October the Friendly Support Caller Program had 20 registered seniors participating, and nine volunteers. The average participant was 78 years of age. There were 25 total calls, totaling 484 minutes, with the average length of a call being just over 19.36 minutes.

Mr. San Ramon advised that based on the updates from volunteers, seniors have been going out more and visiting with friends and family, especially during Thanksgiving. He noted that some of the volunteers have had such a great rapport with some of their clients that they have met them in person.

11. Identification of Other Issues, and Suggestions to Assist Seniors and Persons Living With Disabilities

- It was noted that Peter Julian, MP, is advocating for senior's dental care;
- Those in need of printing out their vaccine passport may do so at the offices of Peter Julian, MP, or Jennifer Whiteside, MLA. The Legion Manor is also looking into providing this service for seniors;
- University of British Columbia dentistry students are looking to get out and work with people so it is hoped that they can visit those in the lines outside of the Union Gospel Mission; and,

- Many seniors are approaching the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction as they have not submitted their tax returns have been cut off of benefits including the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and they may be eligible for the Ministry's support in transitioning to other types of benefits based on their age, etc.

12. Member Updates

Staff Updates

- Staff will be looking into working with the Province to see about providing a 24 hour, seven day a week cooling centre for future extreme heat events; and;
- Century House is now open every Saturday until December 18th for COVID-19 vaccination clinics from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

External Member Updates

No updates were provided.

Next Steps & Meeting Schedule

13. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

The next meeting is December 1, 2021.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

John Stark, Co-Chair

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk