

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

**March 24, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.**

*(Due to precautionary health measures, only City staff are permitted to personally attend meetings)*

**PRESENT (in Person):**

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, Development Services

**PRESENT (via Teleconference):**

***Staff:***

John Stark, Co-Chair/Supervisor, Community Planning  
Karen Campbell, Policy Planner, Development Services  
Alison Ching, Recreation Leader, Parks & Recreation  
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, Development Services  
Rob McCullough, Manager, Museums and Heritage Services  
Veronika Metchie, Senior Bylaw Officer, Integrated Services  
Constable Camille Oliveira, New Westminister Police Department  
Paolo Zenone, Recreation Leader, Park & Recreation  
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, Legislative Services

***Organizational Representatives:***

Melita Caissie, Fraserside Community Services Society  
Calvin Donnelly, Sapperton Old Age Pensioners' Association  
Fay Duxbury, New Westminister Family Place  
Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Manor  
Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC/Lived Experience  
Kay Johnson, New West Hospice Society  
Carter LaFontaine, Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice  
Jennifer Lee, Union Gospel Mission  
Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society/NWOCAT  
Karl San Ramon, Seniors Services Society  
Patricia Steiner, Family Services of Vancouver  
Betina Wheeler, New Westminister Homelessness Coalition Society

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

### **1. Introductions & Roll Call**

Introductions and a roll call took place.

### **2. Joint Meeting Minutes**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, shared that minutes from the previous two meetings will be circulated soon.

## **Joint Task Force Items**

### **3. Update on Standing Items**

#### *Task Force Web Portal and Weekly Email Update*

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised that the purpose of the web portal is to assist residents in accessing COVID-19 resources and services, including Key Information and Resources for Tenants, the List of Financial Supports, the Food Resources Calendar, the Survival Resources Guide, and the COVID-19 Trusted Links and Resources List.

Mr. Mehdic reminded members that the weekly email is also a good source of information and now has two new sections: a COVID-19 statistics section, and a section for vaccine and immunization information. As well, the email contains information regarding funding, upcoming events, surveys, reports, etc. Members were urged to let staff know of any updates or improvements that can be made to the web portal or the weekly information email.

#### *Financial Resources Update*

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, shared the following information:

- As of April 2021, those on income assistance and disability assistance will receive a permanent \$175 month increase to their benefits;
- The BC Child Opportunity benefit is a tax free monthly payment to families with children under the age of 18 that has been offered since October 2020; and,
- There is a Call for Intermediaries for the Supporting Black Canadians Community initiative for western Canada.

In addition, Mr. Johnson advised that vaccination appointments are now open to a wider range of age groups who can book their immunizations by phone or online.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, announced that the Anvil Centre has been identified as a future vaccination site and further information will be shared soon, noting that this site will be in addition to several other vaccination sites already established in the city.

#### *Tenant Resources Update*

Karen Campbell, Policy Planner, advised of the following:

- The extended rental freeze and renovictions bill, if passed, would come into effect as of July 1, 2021 at which time the City's resource document will be updated to reflect the changes and the information will also be shared via CityPage and through the food security and resource hubs; and,
- On March 8, 2021, a joint Federal and Provincial rent aid program called the British Columbia Housing Benefit was announced to assist select households that do not qualify for other rental assistant programs.

#### *Youth Services Update*

Paolo Zenone, Recreation Leader, provided various updates, including:

- Youth Services has seen a large influx of youth visiting the facility over Spring Break;
- The Royal City Sound DJ Program and the Music Scene Program have both been full on the days they are offered;
- The Media Mastery Program offers Photoshop, coding, and video editing;
- Summer programming is now being worked on; and,
- Youth Services, in partnership with Fraser Health, have just signed on a new counsellor who is now available for youth to address COVID-19 and other mental health related issues.

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

Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, and John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised of food security planning and program updates, including:

- The City received a \$101,000 Reaching Home (RH) grant to fund five food security and resource hubs until March 31 2021. As well, the City also received interim funding of \$66,000 for three to four months and will apply for additional RH grant funding once new application intake opens up;

- In addition to funding the food security and resource hubs, the RH funds facilitated the implementation of both the shower and laundry initiatives;
- Households participating in the ‘Don’t Go Hungry Program’ at St. Aidan’s Presbyterian Church have increased from 135 to 157 over the last three weeks;
- In response to participants’ desires to receive higher quality protein items such as meat and chicken, and move away from canned items, a halal butcher is being worked with to provide meat and chicken on alternate weeks, which will be accessible to everyone;
- Over the past two weeks, 41 shopping buggies were provided to very grateful people who will use them to take home more food and supplies than they could previously, and more buggies will be given out over the next two weeks; and,
- The City has approved \$90,000 to enhance outreach services, including at the food security and resource hubs; therefore, a call for proposals will soon be going out.

## **5. Museum and Heritage Services Update**

Rob McCullough, Manager, Museums and Heritage Services, advised of various activities that will be taking place at the museum and are relevant to the Task Forces, including:

- The Air Hugs exhibition starting next week which will consist of photographs taken by Oana Capota, Curator, Museum and Heritage Services, during her walk throughout the city during the pandemic;
- A series of Indigenous films addressing decolonization and the Indian Act will be shown, virtually, throughout the summer;
- The ‘Sharing is Caring’ program will commence in April and be comprised of people’s experiences with COVID-19, including stories and photographs;
- Work continues on the ‘Family You Choose’ exhibit which will draw awareness to the families and social units that we create for ourselves; and,
- Staff continue seeking opportunities to bring different voices and lived experiences to the museum.

Links to the City’s museum and heritage work and events will be shared in the weekly Task Force email.

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

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, shared that the City continues to work with BC Housing to provide additional emergency response beds and, while it is very challenging to secure appropriately sized space that will allow required physical distancing for 40 plus people for a period of 12-18 months, a few locations have been identified and it is hoped that one will be confirmed soon.

As well, the City and BC Housing also continues work on securing space for 50-60 supportive housing units, and it is hoped that more information will be available in the next two to three months.

In response to questions from Task Force members, Mr. Stark provided the following comments:

- Although still at the very preliminary stage, accessibility is a primary consideration for the supportive housing units, and further discussion will occur regarding who the potential clientele of these units would be;
- The supportive housing units will address the needs of those who are homeless and precariously housed, keeping in mind that those populations are aging and the housing should be accessible to all and allow for aging in place;
- End of life care will also be a consideration for the supportive housing needs and this component will be brought into discussions with BC Housing; and,
- Another issue that has been identified are those that may end up homeless due to unexpected circumstances, such as life-changing injuries, and they may not have an appropriate place to go once they leave the hospital.

## **7. Strengthening Communities' Services Funding Application**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, announced that the City will be submitting an application for a Strengthening Communities' Services Program grant for approximately \$400,000; however, the City is eligible for up to \$2,500,000. Mr. Stark advised that the Program is meant to support public health and safety, preparation for future waves of COVID-19, and the safe re-opening of economies.

Mr. Stark screen-shared a document (attached) which outlined various aspects of the Program such as:

- Program criteria;
- Additional task force criteria; and,
- Possible activities or projects.

In response to questions from Task Force members, Mr. Stark provided the following comments:

- Wheel chair accessible kitchens could be addressed under the Reaching Home Community Kitchen Initiative; and,
- The projected cost of the activities and projects outlined is \$330,000, which will allow for overages. If needed, the City can request additional funding in the future.

Kay Johnson, New West Hospice Society, advised that she would share the Program funding information with the Palliative Care Team at Fraser Health to see if they have any suggestions.

Task Force members were encouraged to send additional comments and/or suggestions directly to Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst.

## **At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force Items**

### **8. Health Contact Centre (Overdose Prevention Site) Update**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded members that a report is going to Council on March 29, 2021 for consideration of the Temporary Use Permit for the Health Contact Centre to be located at 40 Begbie Street and operated by the Lower Mainland Purpose Society. If approved, the project, which has drawn some concern but also a lot of support, will move ahead.

### **9. Laundry and Shower Initiatives**

Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, has advised that the shower initiative at the Canada Games Pool is going well and running without incident. She stated that those participating are grateful for the opportunity to shower as well as for the comfort kits they receive upon arrival at the facility.

Ms. Wheeler shared that the laundry program run through the Lookout Housing and Health Society began this week allowing patrons to drop their laundry off for cleaning, noting that the program may change as we move forward in order to better address where the need is, and that laundry vouchers may be made available in the future to those that need them.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded members that both of these initiatives are a result of suggestions from the Task Forces and thanked everyone for their valuable input during meetings.

### **10. Identification of Other Issues and Suggestions to Assist At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations**

Task Force members were encouraged to forward any issues or suggestions to assist the at-risk and vulnerable populations directly to Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, so that staff may explore ways to address them.

### **11. Member Updates**

No updates were provided.

## Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities Task Force Items

### 12. Friendly Support Caller Program

Alison Ching, Recreation Leader, shared that the Program now has a total of 15 volunteers and 30 clients. She noted that since the last meeting there was a total of 39 calls made over 903 minutes, averaging 22.8 minutes per call.

Ms. Ching noted that volunteers are reporting to being vaccinated or planning to do so soon, and that many people are happy that Century House is now a pop up vaccination clinic. She advised that one client has consistently been using the Key West Ford volunteer driver program to get to and from various appointments.

### 13. Identification of Other Issues and Suggestions to Assist Seniors and Person Living with Disabilities

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reiterated the discussion earlier in the meeting and confirmed that he would follow up with Fraser Health and the Seniors Services Society regarding transportation for vulnerable seniors to vaccinations sites.

### 14. Member Updates

No updates were provided.

## Next Step & Meeting Schedule

### 14. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

Mr. Stark thanked everyone for their input and advised that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, April 14, 2021.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

Original Signed  
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**John Stark, Co-Chair**

Original Signed  
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**Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk**