

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

April 14, 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
Jacklyn Altamura, Co-Chair/Recreation Supervisor, Century House
Alison Ching, Recreation Leader, Parks & Recreation
Nav Dhanoya, Property Compliance Coordinator
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, Development Services
Constable Camille Oliveira, New Westminster 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 Westminster Family Place
Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Manor
Kay Johnson, New West Hospice Society
Carter LaFontaine, Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice
Jennifer Lee, Union Gospel Mission
Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral
Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society/NWOCAT
Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Karl San Ramon, Seniors Services Society
Wazhma Wakil, Umbrella Multicultural Health Co-op
Betina Wheeler, New Westminster 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, reminded members to let Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, or Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, know of any errors in the minutes, noting that they are not verbatim.

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 provide access to reliable COVID-19 resource information in one place. He noted that the regularly updated information includes Key Information and Resources for Tenants, the List of Financial Supports, the Food Resources Calendar, the Survival Resources Guide, information on the Friendly Support Caller Program, and the COVID-19 Trusted Links and Resources List, which was recently updated to include information regarding vaccines.

Mr. Mehdic reminded members that the weekly resource emails include information noted above as well other standing information updates regarding vaccines and immunizations, as well as funding opportunities.

Financial Resources Update

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

- The Provincial Government has implemented job protection leave for workers to get a COVID-19 vaccine;
- New emergency funding is now available for students attending a post secondary institution who experience an unexpected emergency. The funds may be used to cover living expenses, food, travel, laptops, etc.;
- Members were encouraged to visit the Fraser Health website regularly for vaccination information as it is updated often;
- Registering for the vaccine assists in determining how many vaccines are needed; and,

- The Province is looking at how to provide more vaccines to front line workers.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that he contacted Fraser Health with respect to providing transportation to vaccination sites for those who need it and was informed that they are currently escalating issues such as this to the Province for a coordinated response; however, there is currently nothing to announce.

Mr. Johnson shared three graphs which outlined the following:

- Graph 1: Number of COVID-19 cases in New Westminister per month;
- Graph 2: Number of COVID-19 cases in New Westminister week by week; and,
- Graph 3: New Westminister's ranking in cumulative COVID-19 cases in local health areas.

Tenant Resources Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised of the following updates:

- Effective March 25, 2021, changes to Provincial Tenancy Act include:
 - A rental freeze increase which has been extended to December 31, 2021;
 - A cap on rental increases to the rate of inflation, starting in 2022;
 - Effective January 1, 2021, landlords will be required apply to the Residential Tenancy Branch prior to terminating a tenancy agreement for the purpose of renovations and will not be permitted to end tenancies for renovations that are not substantial and do not require the rental unit to be vacated; and,
- Proposed changes to Provincial Tenancy Act include:
 - Improved fairness in the residential tenancy dispute resolution process; and,
 - Clarification of language in the Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act to address conflict between Park rules and tenancy agreements.

Youth Services Update

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

- Youth Week will run from May 1 to 7, 2021 with events such as Chose Your Own Adventure, creation of a Window of Memories at the Youth Centre, Youth Speak – An Afternoon of Wellness, the Youth Awards, a hoop shoot in the Moody Park basketball court, and a wrap up party; and,

- Contact information, etc., for the new youth counsellor will be included in the weekly Task Force email.

4. Food Security Plans Update

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

- The \$101,000 Reaching Home (RH) grant was used to support five food security and resource hubs, assisting upwards of 750 people per week;
- Supplemental interim funding from the RH grant has enabled the five food security and resource hubs to continue operating as the previously received funding was required to be used by March 31, 2021. In addition, the interim funding has facilitated the implementation of the shower and laundry initiatives and the city will apply for additional funds once another fund request intake is opened up;
- The City is looking at a permanent solution for washroom access to facilitate sanitation and hygiene for the street entrenched population;
- There is a continued increase in new people visiting the food security and resource hubs with approximately 160 people being seen in one half hour at St. Aidan's 'Don't Go Hungry Program'; and,
- A thank you has been sent to the Vancouver Foundation, the United Way of the Lower Mainland, the Greater Vancouver Foodbank Society, and the Reaching Home Program, who have contributed approximately \$450,000 in funding to the City to address the needs of at-risk and vulnerable populations.

5. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, announced that the City and BC Housing have identified a possible site for the Emergency Response Centre (ERC) and that more information will be shared when appropriate. The ERC will provide shelter for up to 25 plus people and allow for pandemic required physically distancing. It is hoped that the ERC will be open within the next three months.

The City also continues to work with BC Housing on supportive housing for men and women that will include common areas and 24 hour staffing. Additional information on both projects is forthcoming.

As well, the City is exploring other emergency shelter, supportive, below or no market housing options with BC Housing.

6. Strengthening Communities' Services Funding Application

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, recapped the information shared at the last meeting regarding the Strengthening Communities' Services Program grant which is being offered to support municipal initiatives related to those who are unsheltered, including those associated with health and safety.

Mr. Stark advised that a report went to Council on April 12, 2021 which outlined 10 activities or projects that could be funded through Strengthening Communities' Services Program funding, most of which would be in partnership with faith and non-profit organizations. The City's application will be submitted on April 16, 2021 requesting about \$450,000. Mr. Stark noted that if the City is not approved for the full amount applied for, another report will go to Council to re-address priorities.

At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force Items

7. Health Contact Centre (Overdose Prevention Site) Update

Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society/NWOCAT, announced that this five-year anniversary of B.C.'s overdose crisis reinforces the need for the Health Contact Centre (HCC) located at 40 Begbie Street. She shared that neighbours have been invited to the grand opening next week and offered the opportunity to tour the facility and, as most of the tours have been booked, additional tours are being considered for people to take.

Ms. Pankratz shared that the safe-use aspect of the HCC will accommodate up to eight people at a time, as will the post consumption "chill out area", both of which will adhere to COVID-19 protocols. She stated that neither of the areas are expected to ever be at full capacity.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded the Task Forces that the Lower Mainland Purpose Society will conduct drug checks for contaminate as well as offering an array of other wrap around services. He thanked Ms. Pankratz for all of her work and encouraged members to visit the HCC. It is hoped that additional funding for the HCC can be realized through the Strengthening Communities' Services Program funding.

8. Laundry and Shower Initiatives

Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, shared that the shower initiative has been very successful with 60 people participating in the program in March alone, and with staff having reported only one incident. Ms. Wheeler noted that, given the number of unanticipated repeat participants in the program, a review of the courtesy bags received by clients upon arrival at the Canada Games Pool will be undertaken. The bags contain a towel, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, granola bar, etc.

Ms. Wheeler advised that the laundry program which allows patrons to drop their laundry off for cleaning has not seen as much interest as was anticipated. Ms. Wheeler and Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, will look at revamping the program, including other laundry issues such as the provision of laundry soap to those that need it.

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

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised of the ongoing challenges around portable washrooms such as maintenance, cleaning, and vandalism, and shared that the City is exploring other ways to meet the need for public washrooms, such as a self-cleaning toilet facility or a trailer, with the latter in partnership with a non-profit organization that would oversee the maintenance. He noted that the need for accessible public toilets has grown due to restricted access to other washroom facilities

10. Member Updates

No updates were received.

Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities Task Force Items

11. 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 21 calls made over 461 minutes, averaging 21.95 minutes per call.

Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, Century House, advised that a Program client experiencing difficulty navigating some city streets, will be contacted by the appropriate staff member to address their challenges.

Ms. Altamura announced that administration of the Friendly Support Caller Program will soon be transferred to the Seniors Services Society, and that the transfer agreement is anticipated to be finalized at the end of the week.

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

No updates were received.

13. Member Updates

External Member Updates

- Karl San Ramon, Seniors Services Society, advised that their seniors grocery program previously served 27 seniors and this month is supporting 14 seniors; and,
- Kay Johnson, New West Hospice Society, announced that on Friday, April 16, 2021, the Society would be hosting an online event called, “Starting the Difficult Conversations for Young Families”, noting that anyone is welcome to attend.

Staff Member Updates

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised of the upcoming ‘Sharing is Caring’ event to be held on April 15, 2021 by the City of New Westminster’s Museums and Archives spotlighting photos taken throughout the City during the pandemic. The invitation will be shared again in the resource email.

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, May 5, 2021.

The meeting adjourned at 1:57 p.m.

Original Signed
John Stark, Co-Chair

Original Signed
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk