

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

May 26, 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
Jay Young, Co-Chair/Manager, Recreation Services
Alison Ching, Recreation Leader, Parks & Recreation
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst
Constable John MacDonald, New Westminster Police Department
Paolo Zenone, Recreation Leader, Park & Recreation
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, Legislative Services

Organizational Representatives:

Rick Bloudell, School District #40
Dave Brown, Lookout Housing and Health Society
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
Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
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 that the minutes are not verbatim and capture key discussion points shared during the meetings.

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, reminded Task Force members that the community resources Web Portal is a one stop shop for residents to access pandemic-related information and links including 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.

Mr. Mehdic reminded Task Force members that the weekly email also includes the above information as well as information related to transportation to vaccination centres and other vaccine-related information and links, funding opportunities, upcoming events, COVID-19 statistics, relevant reports, etc. Task Force members were urged to let Mr. Mehdic know if there is additional information that could be added to the email.

Financial Resources and COVID-19 Updates

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, advised that changes to the List of Financial Resources include:

- The Provincial Government's COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave Program which provides up to three days of paid sick leave for those that need to stay home due to COVID-19 until December 31, 2021;
- The Canada Child Benefit Young Child Supplement will provide up to four tax-free payments during 2021 for families with children under the age of six; and,
- Funding for charitable organizations includes the Healthy Communities Initiative, etc.

Mr. Johnson shared the BC Centre for Disease Control website with Task Force members and demonstrated how to look up various COVID-19 related statistics. He also shared the BC Restart Plan chart, noting that dates shown are the earliest dates that changes in restrictions would be implemented and that if numbers do not remain steady or go down, the dates may change.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded Task Force members that even as we begin the slow start back to normal activities, the at-risk and vulnerable populations, seniors, and those with disabilities will feel the effects of the pandemic long after it is over.

Tenant Resources Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared that the most recent update to the Tenant Resources document on the Web Portal includes information regarding the rent increase freeze which has been extended until December 21, 2021, the cap on rent increases starting in 2022, and other changes that have been introduced to protect renters from renovations

Youth Services Update

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

- A very successful Youth Week was held from May 1 to May 7, 2021;
- The Youth Awards can be viewed on the City's Be Heard website; and,
- The planning of summer programs has begun based on the new Public Health Orders and will include various outdoor pop ups at different parks throughout the city.

Mr. Zenone advised that the incorrect version of the Youth Resource document was erroneously sent out and that the correct one will be disseminated soon. He requested that Task Force members let him know if there is anything that should be included in the document.

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 that the City received through the Federal Government's Reaching Home Program is supporting five food security and resource hubs which feed approximately 750 people per week and an amendment contract was recently signed for an additional \$56,000 to extend this essential

programming for a three-month period. If there is another intake for funding through this Program, it is hoped that the City will once again be able to extend funding;

- The City has also applied to the Strengthening Communities' Services Program for funding in the amount of \$446,000 for nine initiatives, including enhanced drop-in, meal and outreach services;
- Provision of basic hampers for who may not qualify for one through the food security and resource hubs began last week with the help of Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Manor, along with pillows which were recently donated as well. Please contact Ms. Ennis if you know of anyone who may be able use one of the 10 hampers that are left of the 100 that were put together; and,
- Overall, the number of households patronizing the food security and resource hubs remains consistent; however, higher numbers at the Queensborough site has resulted in them running out of food two weeks in a row, indicating hidden needs within that community.

Mr. Stark reminded Task Force members that Ms. Wheeler continues to work on programming that will enable food and resource hub services to continue beyond the pandemic.

Ms. Wheeler advised that the food security and resource hubs are always in need of supplies such as diapers, feminine hygiene products, etc., noting that laundry soap and bigger items such as sugar are more challenging to purchase as most stores do not carry the large number of a product needed at any given time. Ms. Wheeler shared that while they do have a lot of hand sanitizer available, they are in need of large-sized gloves. Task Force members were urged to contact her if they are in need of hand sanitizer.

5. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, shared that the City has been working hard on relocating beds from the Cliff Block and that on May 31, 2021, staff hope to bring a preliminary Temporary Use Permit (TUP) report to Council in anticipation of a new Emergency Response Centre (ERC). It is hoped that the TUP will be issued for mid-June or early-July for an ERC that will accommodate 15 to 25 beds, depending on the configuration of the space. Mr. Stark noted that a second ERC site is also being considered which would, along with the first ERC, see a total of 50 beds available by the fall. He advised that the report will be shared with the Task Force members once it is made public and that people will have the opportunity to write to the City to express their support or non-support of the TUP.

Mr. Stark shared that the City also continues to work with BC Housing to provide up to 52 supportive housing units; however, as this work is in advanced discussions regarding costs and responsibilities, the potential site for the units cannot yet be

disclosed. It is anticipated that a report will be going to Council in July or August 2021 with respect to a possible Official Community Plan amendment and Rezoning, which will be required in order to deliver the units which will provide housing and a variety of onsite amenities and services for both men and women.

At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force Items

6. Health Contact Centre (Overdose Prevention Site) Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, stated that the Health Contact Centre (HCC), which is helping to address the overdose epidemic, has now been operating for seven weeks and that more people are utilizing the services offered at the HCC as they find out about it. He noted that as it is only open from early afternoon to 10:30/11:00 p.m., some homeless people are unable to access it in the early morning. In addition, Mr. Stark advised that \$50,000 of the anticipated funding applied for through the Strengthening Communities' Services Program is earmarked to support the HCC which has facilitated the resuscitation of a number of people thus far.

Lastly, Mr. Stark announced that, Courtney Pankratz is moving on from the Lower Mainland Purpose Society to pursue other opportunities and that her valuable work, including assisting in the implementation of the Health Contact Centre, is greatly appreciated and that she will be missed.

7. Shower and Laundry Initiatives

Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, shared that the shower initiative has been so successful that it will impact the budget as it has been hard to keep up with the average of 15 people per week, many return visitors, who participate in the initiative and receive a welcome bag and towel with each visit. Ms. Wheeler stated that work is being done to determine how to hand out the bags equitably and keep them sustainable, noting that some participants live in vans and have nowhere else to go to get clean, and that the cost of the bags has already been reduced from \$25 to \$18 per bag. Ms. Wheeler advised that there will be less opportunity over the summer for people to partake in the initiative as other programs open up at the pool and that funding for the initiative will end in June 2021 but it is hoped that the program can continue at a reduced capacity.

Ms. Wheeler advised that laundry initiative has been much less successful than was first expected as most homeless people do not have a lot of clothing, and that staff will approach laundromats to secure use of facilities once further funding is received.

Dave Brown, Lookout Housing and Health Society, confirmed that they have only had a couple of people utilizing the laundry initiative and announced that they currently have an agreement with the Blue Bird Coin Laundry. He shared that they

will begin approaching those who are living in their vans, etc., to get the word out to those that are not only homeless but those who are precariously housed and that once the right population is found, the program will be well received and utilized.

Ms. Wheeler suggested that placing posters about the laundromat service at the Canada Games Pool for those living in vans may be helpful.

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

Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, shared information regarding the ID Bank where people can go to obtain identification to assist them in securing housing, a bank account, etc., noting that a presentation outlining the program is available to be shared with the Task Forces and other groups.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that, perhaps, current Reaching Home Program (RH) funding or funding received through another RH application intake or another funding source could support the ID Bank program, including finding suitable place for it to be located.

9. Member Updates

No updates were provided.

Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities Task Force Items

Jay Young, Manager, Recreation Services, assumed the Chair.

10. Friendly Support Caller Program

Alison Ching, Recreation Leader, shared that the Program has a total of 12 volunteers and 26 clients. She noted that since the last meeting there was a total of 37 calls made over 531 minutes, averaging 14.35 minutes per call during which clients are being reminded to register for their vaccinations if they are interested in receiving one.

Ms. Ching reminded Task Force members that the Program is in the process of transferring to the Seniors Services Society and that clients are currently being informed of the transfer.

Jay Young, Manager, Recreation Services stated that Century House staff are looking forward to opening up so that participants of the Friendly Support Caller Program can meet each other in person.

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

Discussion ensued regarding the Tuesday and Thursday Dinner Program at Century House (CH) and it was noted that often a number of meals are taken by individuals who are delivering them to others, indicating a need to keep the Program going after the pandemic; however, as it is not feasible for it to continue running out of Century House as programs resume. As such, Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, will visit CH to discuss other options to continue provision of the service, including possible delivery of meals to buildings in need, and that sometimes meals are disposed as no one picks them up.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that updates will be provided at the next meeting with respect to suggestions made at the last meeting, including wheelchair accessible washroom, shower, and laundry facilities, walking buddies for seniors, and credit check assistance for seniors.

12. Member Updates

External Member Updates

- Kay Johnson, New West Hospice Society, advised of the Caregivers Support Group which will be starting online on June 15, 2021; and,
- Rick Bloudell, School District #40, shared that the School District and community schools will be offering a variety of summer recreation programs that will cost \$25, as well as a recreation and literacy program that will run from Monday through Friday. Task Force members were encouraged to contact Mr. Bloudell if they knew of any families who may benefit from these programs.

Staff Updates

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, is currently researching freestanding self-cleaning toilets to address the increase in human waste in public spaces due to lack of accessible washrooms, and that the research includes contacting other cities who have these washrooms to find out about costs of hook up, maintenance, etc. He noted that the City is also exploring other options such as clean waste wag bags and a washroom trailer and that a report will be going to Council to determine how the City will move forward to address this very important issue that affects businesses, the homeless, and seniors.

Next Step & Meeting Schedule

14. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, thanked everyone for their input and advised that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, June 16, 2021.

The meeting adjourned at 2:02 p.m.

Original Signed
John Stark, Co-Chair

Original Signed
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk