

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

June 16, 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
Constable Camille Oliveira, New Westminster Police Department
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst
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
Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC/Lived Experience
Natalie Johnston, Fraser Health, Community Health Specialist
Carter LaFontaine, Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice
Bonnie Moriarty, Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver
Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Karl San Ramon, Seniors Services Society
Travis Walker, Site Coordinator, Health Contact Centre
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 are a summary of the meeting, capturing key discussion points.

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 Web Portal allows residents and faith-based organizations to access pandemic-related resources in one area. Information on the Web Portal 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.

Mr. Mehdic reminded members that the information listed on the Web Portal is also included in the weekly email updates and noted that, since the emails are getting very long, more information is being sent out in links in an effort to keep the emails manageable. Task Force members were encouraged to let him know of anything that should be added to the Web Portal and weekly email.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that the Food Resources Calendar and the Survival Resources Guide are also provided in printable form and as hard copies to make sharing the information easier.

Financial Resources and COVID-19 Updates

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, advised of the following with respect to the List of Financial Resources:

- The BC Recovery Benefit must be applied for by June 30, 2021;
- Some funding available includes:
 - Ending Violence Association (EVA) is offering funding for community response services for sexual assault survivors;

- Women's Employment Readiness Pilot Program through Employment and Social Development Canada; and,
- The Black Entrepreneurship Program.

Mr. Johnson noted that information for the benefits and funding will be included in the meeting's follow up email and that the Financial Resources List would be updated monthly over the summer.

With respect to COVID-19 statistics, Mr. Johnson shared that cases in the Province have been down to as low as 29 new cases, which is the lowest we have seen since September 2020, and that 79 percent of New Westminster residents aged 12 and over and 84 percent of residents aged 50 and older have received at least one vaccination.

Tenant Resources Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared that there have been no updates to the tenant resource information since April and that the Web Portal and Task Force members would be updated when they are received.

Youth Services Update

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

- The Youth Centre will be transitioning to summer hours on June 28th and be open from 3:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday;
- There are a lot of activities planned for the summer and safety plans are being updated as restrictions change; and,
- The past month at the Youth Centre has been busy, including with Grade Five Week, which was well attended.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, shared that research has been conducted with respect to how the pandemic has affected youth, noting that soon the Wellness and Welcome Centres would be opening up at the new high school and offer mental health and settlement resources to youth and young adults.

In response to a Task Force member's suggestion to build connections between seniors and teenagers through cooking, Mr. Zenone advised that many senior and youth events have taken place in the past, including an inter-generational dinner and that, although a lot of people may now have received the COVID-19 vaccine, particular care needs to be taken when working with food and, per Public Health Order restrictions, the kitchen at the Youth Centre is currently closed. Mr. Zenone stated that more inter-generational programming will be planned in the future and that Leaders in Training Program participants may be able to share this programming with their peers.

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 City received funding of \$101,000, \$56,000, and \$33,000 through the Reaching Home Grant Program, and it is hoped that a further intake for funding will open in August; however, that is not guaranteed. The funds received to date are helping to support the five food security and resource hubs which are feeding approximately 750 people on a weekly basis. In addition, the funds are also helping with the shower and laundry initiatives and the provision of portable toilets;
- The food security and resource hubs have seen numbers level off; however, St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church saw an additional 10 clients this week, possibly from Burnaby;
- The Saturday brunch offered at Holy Trinity Cathedral feeds approximately 70 people each week;
- Work is being done on developing food security and resource partnerships that can sustain and support each other and determination of how each food security and resource hub will move forward, whether it be as an emergency support or an ongoing resource;
- From the greenhouse, Parks are sharing beets, carrots, cucumbers, kohlrabi, etc., with the food security and resource hubs in addition to what Councillor Puchmayr donates from his Barnston Island farm, and food being grown in the garden at St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church will be going to the food security and resource hub located there; and,
- One hundred basic pantry hampers have gone out to residents at the Ross Tower, Dunwood Place, the Royal City Legion Manor, and two co-ops, along with brand new pillows received via donation through the Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver.

5. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that these updates will be provided in the upcoming agenda item, "Homelessness Response Strategy."

6. Homelessness Response Strategy

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, shared a presentation which outlined:

- Short-term responses that the City has undertaken to address the homelessness crisis, in particular:
 - Meeting the basic needs of the homeless community through senior government, foundation, and program funding; and,
 - Responding to business and resident concerns that come with increased homelessness, including exploring the feasibility of installing free-standing, self-cleaning toilets amongst other things;
- Long-term responses, including:
 - Continued work with BC Housing to secure additional shelter capacity and supportive housing; and,
 - Hiring additional staff to work with faith-based and non-profit organizations on supportive and non-market housing initiatives; and,
- Proposal of an Inter-Departmental Working Group to further address homelessness and other related issues.

In response to questions from Task Force members, Mr. Stark, and Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, provided the following comments:

- With respect to hiring a washroom attendant to manage the washroom(s), the individual would have to be paid a living wage and not be reliant on tips, as well as operate the facility overnight;
- As part of the Digital Inclusion Initiative, a map has been created that shows free Wi-Fi access throughout the city. As well, other partnerships are being worked on to provide free Wi-Fi in seniors' buildings, etc., and a this was also included in the recent Strengthening Communities' Services Program funding request;
- Charging stations will be added to the Wi-Fi access map; and,
- A report will be going to Council on July 12, 2021 requesting that some funding received for portable toilets be reallocated to the Hey Neighbour Collective at Ross Tower, which would be a pilot building for the Initiative, as well as to the ID bank which will assist people in securing identification needed for gaining employment, opening a bank account, securing housing, etc.

7. Health Contact Centre (Overdose Prevention Site) Update

Travis Walker, Site Coordinator of the Health Contact Centre (HCC) advised that the HCC has now been open for 2.5 months, providing safe, indoor witnessed drug

consumption with staff who have been trained with Naloxone and can intervene in the event of an overdose. Mr. Walker also noted that drugs can be checked on-site, prior to use, and that they are hoping to obtain a spectrometer to facilitate more in-depth drug testing. He shared that the number of visitors to the HCC continues to increase as word of the facility spreads and that, currently, there are two outreach worker positions open, who will be in the community liaising with people who may benefit from the services offered at the HCC.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised of the importance of keeping the community advisory committee informed and to address misinformation that is spread, noting that the committee is a great way to get information out to residents and businesses, as well as through Theresa McManus of the New Westminster Record.

8. Shower and Laundry Initiatives

Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, shared that the shower initiative has been well received by the community and that Parks staff are getting to know program participants. Ms. Wheeler advised that the shower services will be reduced over the summer as the pool opens up more programming and that it will be moving to the Centennial Community Centre to provide additional shower times for the clients. As well, the welcome bags, which participants receive upon arrival at the pool, will be revised as Parks has been receiving items in bulk to be included in the bags.

Ms. Wheeler stated that minimal uptake is still being seen with respect to the laundry initiative, and that posters have been circulated in the community to encourage utilization of the program. Further discussion will take place regarding how this initiative will move forward.

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

No items.

10. Member Updates

No items.

Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities Task Force Items

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

11. Friendly Support Caller Program

Karl San Ramon, Seniors Services Society, announced that as of June 3, 2021 the Society had taken over administrating the Friendly Support Caller Program and that between May 27, 2021 and today, the total number of volunteers is 12, the number of clients is 25, and that the total number of calls was 18 over 515 minutes.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, noted that the Program was introduced at the beginning of the pandemic to provide health checks for seniors that may not be connected in other ways, and to assure them that someone is there for them. Mr. Stark advised that this Program will be built upon with regards to the Ross Tower and the Hey Neighbour Collective.

Mr. Young announced that Century House would be opening on July 1, 2021 and offering social pods that people can register for and which will allow seniors to come into the building to socialize with others. He also advised that consideration is being given to possibly opening the lobby of Century House as a cooling centre in anticipation of an extreme heat event and as pandemic restrictions lessen.

In response to a suggestion by a Task Force member, Mr. Stark advised that the possible provision of fans would be brought to the attention of Assistant Deputy Fire Chief, Rob Dick, with respect to the extreme heat alerts which offer advice on how to keep cool and that staff will look into funding to facilitate the provision of fans and/or small air conditioners for seniors.

Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Manor, suggested that funding for fans could possibly come from the Red Cross and that the City could loan them out to seniors upon receipt of a medical note.

In light of time, agenda items 12 and 13 were not addressed.

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

See above.

13. Member Updates

See above.

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, July 7, 2021 during which future meeting times will be discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

Original Signed
John Stark, Co-Chair

Original Signed
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk