



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**

**February 2, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.  
Meeting Held Electronically**

**PRESENT:**

***Staff:***

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

***Organizational Representatives:***

Rick Bloudell, School District #40  
Terry Brock, Lookout Housing and Health Society  
Fay Duxbury, New Westminster Family Place  
Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Manor  
Natalie Johnston, Fraser Health Authority  
Carter LaFontaine, Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice  
Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral  
Adriana Mitchell, Lower Mainland Purpose Society  
Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction  
Jennifer, 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

***Guest:***

Miriam Larson, Consulting Gerontologist, Seniors Housing Collaborative

The meeting convened at 1:03 p.m. and John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, assumed the Chair.

## 1. Land Acknowledgment, Introductions & Roll Call

Introductions and a roll call took place.

Mr. Stark welcomed everyone to the meeting and recognized that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered 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.

## 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.

Mr. Stark noted that in order to accommodate staff schedules, Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities Task Force agenda items would be addressed prior to other agenda items.

### 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 members that the COVID-19 Community Resources Web Portal continues to be updated and includes key items such as the Food Resources Calendar and Survival Resources Guide (both of which are updated weekly), the List of Financial Supports, Tenant Resources, etc.

Mr. Mehdic noted that the Weekly Newsletter provides a number of upfront updates in different categories. Highlights of this week's newsletter include:

- An invitation to take a community survey related to the City's Community Energy and Emissions Plan for 2050;
- Updates on the Personal Identification Bank at the Lower Mainland Purpose Society;
- Training events such as an upcoming Period Poverty, and Public Policy session; and,
- A recently released report regarding overcoming digital divides.

Adriana Mitchell, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, announced that the Personal Identification Bank received 18 referrals last week, nine intakes, with four people waiting for their identification to arrive, noting that the numbers are great for a new program. She advised that a lot of the referrals do not include contact information so clients will need to drop into the clinic to access the service. As the clients are from

British Columbia, most of the costs were waived for them, therefore, funding requests were not required.

### *Financial Resources and COVID-19 Updates*

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, advised that the List of Financial Supports was last updated on January 10, 2022 and will be updated again on February 9, 2022.

With respect to COVID-19 statistics, Mr. Johnson shared the following information:

- New Westminster has very strong vaccination rates in comparison to other BC municipalities;
- In the Fraser Health region, as of February 1, 2022, at 63 percent, the city had highest first dose rate of five to eleven year olds;
- As of February 1, 2022, approximately 1,035 British Columbians are currently in the hospital with COVID-19, with 469 of those in the Fraser Health region; and,
- There have been 71 COVID-19 related deaths in BC during the past week and, as of February 1, 2022, there have been 2,625 deaths associated with COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic, with 1,229 of those in the Fraser Health region. Mr. Johnston noted that the large number of deaths in the region are relative to the high population.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, brought forth the idea of having a vaccination clinic through the Extreme Weather Response Program, or other ways to reach the unsheltered population as it is often more difficult for that community to access services. Staff will follow up with Natalie Johnston of the Fraser Health Authority.

### *Tenant Resources Update*

Mr. Johnson noted that the Tenant Resources Guide was last updated on January 10, 2022 and will be updated again on February 9, 2022.

## **4. Food Security Planning Update**

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

- The food security and resource hubs are providing service to approximately 255 households, including 12 new ones last week, most of which are families;
- There was an issue with the Legion Manor food program as the caretakers were not available to pass out the food; however, it was handled and Calvin Donnelly has volunteered to act as a backup in the event this comes up again;

- As there is a wait list for the emergency hamper deliver program run out of St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church, and which has the capacity to assist 35 clients, current clients were reassessed with some being referred to other resources and others given shopping buggies which opened up space for those who cannot travel to a food and resource hub;
- A better way needs to be found to assess and support some of the people that are being referred to the emergency hamper delivery program as many of them have other, non-food related, issues that need to be addressed and they are not connected to resources in the community;
- St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church has submitted an application to Telus for a five hour per week pilot case worker to support assessment and referral for the hamper program;
- A local Beaver Troop prepared birthday boxes for children whose families participate in the hamper program at St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church. The boxes include cake mix, icing, small toys, etc.; and,
- Meetings to address the sustainability of the food and resource hubs are currently underway and will focus on the increased need for these services and funding and budgeting to keep them going.

## 5. Shelter and Temporary Housing Updates

### *Extreme Weather Response Program Shelter (EWRPS)*

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reported that 65 extreme weather response mats are now available until March 31, 2022 during extreme weather events, with up to 50 mats and/or cots located at 502 Columbia Street (former Army and Navy Department Store) and up to 15 at The Russel Housing Centre. He advised that City is advocating that those mats become a winter shelter to be available on a nightly basis between November 1<sup>st</sup> and March 31<sup>st</sup> each year as even a small change in temperature could result in more people needing shelter and to ensure consistency in support. The Health Contact Centre would be the backup for the EWRP Shelter in the event of an emergency such as a burst pipe, etc.

In addition, the City is also advocating that the EWRP Shelter at 502 Columbia Street become a 24/7 shelter with supports for the next 14 to 18 months until the new 52 units of supportive housing at 60 to 68 Sixth Street become available.

Mr. Stark announced that the City is working on a cooling centre for the unsheltered, to have a plan in place should we experience more extreme heat events which are becoming more common. A faith-based or non-profit organization would be sought to host the centre which would be run by experienced staff who are familiar with the vulnerable population.

In response to a suggestion from a Task Force member, Mr. Stark advised that as part of the Homelessness Action Strategy, a homelessness resource centre is being discussed and would provide a place for people to warm up during the day and have access to services, showers, etc.

## **6. Friendly Support Caller Program**

Jennifer of the Seniors Services Society (SSS), reported that the Friendly Support Caller program currently has 20 registered seniors participating and nine volunteers. The average participant is 78 years of age and, recently, there have been a total of 22 calls made, totaling 319 minutes, with the average length of a call being 22 minutes.

Jay Young, Manager, Recreation Services, announced that funding for the Program has been secured until end of February 2022. He noted that the number of calls has gone down significantly since the start of the Program at the beginning of the pandemic when seniors were more significantly isolated and that now they are getting out more to socialize, etc., and that many seniors programs have resumed. Mr. Young advised that there is no budget for the Program beyond February; however, the SSS may wish to continue with it or it could possibly be run again through Century House.

In response to questions from the Task Forces, Mr. Young and John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, stated that the Seniors Peer Counselling Program run out of Century House may be able to take the Program over and continue to provide assistance to those that need it.

Discussion ensued and Task Force members provided the following comments:

- Faith-based communities with a large number of seniors keep in touch with them over the phone;
- Current clients should be informed of the other resources available to them; and,
- The subject matter of the calls may help them be assigned in a meaningful way.

Task Force members agreed with Mr. Young's suggestion that the Program transition back to Century House with the current volunteers being kept in place to maintain consistency for clients.

## **7. Metro Vancouver HomeShare Program Introduction**

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, announced that the Metro Vancouver HomeShare Program is an intergenerational housing initiative that pairs seniors with students which will help to address social isolation amongst seniors and the need for affordable student housing. The Program would see seniors rent a room or suite in their residence to a student in exchange for support around the home. He advised that a flyer about the initiative will be attached to Task Force's weekly email and, Bettina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society (NWHCS), advised that the flyer will be going out in the NWHCS weekly update today.

Mr. Mehdic advised that Kim Hockey from Simon Fraser University will attend a future meeting to discuss the details of the Program with Task Force members.

## **8. Seniors Housing Collaborative**

Miriam Larson, Consulting Gerontologist and Project Manager of the Seniors Housing Collaborative, shared a PowerPoint presentation which outlined the goals of the Collaborative to change policies and practices in order to facilitate seniors aging in place with access to appropriate services and networks, including:

- Overarching policy themes such as:
  - Housing as a human right
  - Seniors Ministry
  - Indigenous considerations
  - Connections; and,
  - Climate Change
- Policy Focus 1: Services
- Policy Focus 2: Housing Policy
- Next steps including researching and refining ideas, partnering with other organizations, identifying opportunities to influence decision makers, and sustainable funding.

Ms. Larson encouraged Task Force members to contact her by email at [miriam@seniorsservicessociety.ca](mailto:miriam@seniorsservicessociety.ca) if they had any feedback.

## **9. Identification of Other Issues, and Suggestions to Assist Assist Seniors and Persons Living With Disabilities**

There were no comments.

## **10. Member Updates**

There were no comments.

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

## **11. Homelessness Action Strategy (HAS)**

Emily Huang, Planning Analyst, shared a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Strategy which included engagements to date and community conversations on homelessness.

In response to questions from Task Force members, Ms. Huang and John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, provided the following comments:

- Community Action Network (CAN) Leaders are working closely with staff and, since they have lived-experience, they may make participation more comfortable for those who struggle with trust issues and feeling judged;
- Hidden voices such as teenagers, women, and the LGBTQ2S and Indigenous communities must be sought out and heard so that their needs can be addressed;
- A hardcopy of the survey is under development and \$25.00 is being provided to non-profit organizations in recognition of their clients' time. Staff could work on providing an honourarium for clients of the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction as well; and,
- Those living in supportive housing will be contacted for their input.

Mr. Stark encouraged Task Force members to let staff know of anyone who may be interested in providing feedback to inform the Homelessness Action Strategy.

## **12. Community Action Network (CAN)**

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, outlined the Community Action Network which is a seven session training program of transferrable skills for those with lived and living experience, and provided the following updates:

- Graduates of the 2020 and 2021 program are currently working with the City on projects such as the Digital Inclusion Initiative, the Sanctuary City Policy, etc.;
- Recruitment for the 2022 CAN sessions, which will be starting soon, has begun;
- There are 12 spaces to fill in the upcoming sessions for which no education is required. Hot meals will be served during the courses and childcare subsidies will be provided for at home care, or provided on site;
- An information session will be held on February 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Holy Trinity Cathedral; and,
- Additional information and a poster will be included in the weekly email to Task Force members.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, acknowledged the importance of the CAN program and encouraged Task Force members to share program information with their networks. He noted that staff are looking into a compensation policy for the program and subsequent work with the City by graduates.

## **13. Health Contact Centre Update**

Travis Walker, Site Coordinator, Health Contact Centre (HCC), reminded Task Force members that the HCC, which is located at 40 Begbie Street, offers a variety of services related to harm reduction such as supervised consumption of drugs, harm reduction supplies, naloxone kits and training, referrals and information on available resources, and drug testing. He shared the following updates:

- Visits to the HCC were down a bit in December but went up again in January and continue to trend upwards;
- There were five overdoses on site in January; however, there have been no deaths to date;
- Fluorescence Detected Magnetic Resonance (FDMR) spectrometer drug testing is going well with an average one to two samples being tested per day. The results are shared with the Fraser Health Authority in order to compare trends and share alerts when needed; and,
- The HCC was opened as a warming centre for four nights towards the end of December with the assistance of New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services (NWFRS) and security provided by the City.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reported that NWFRS is working on a new model with respect to how overdose events are dealt with, as they are often the first responders on the scene, including ways to ensure that follow ups and referrals are conducted after these events to avoid them happening again and to further address the issues and challenges that people are faced with.

#### **14. Identification of Other Issues, and Suggestions to At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations**

There were no comments.

#### **15. Member Updates**

There were no comments.

<b>Next Step &amp; Meeting Schedule</b>
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#### **16. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, thanked everyone for their input and advised that we will start meeting once per month in order to ensure meeting consistency and to accommodate busy schedules.

The meeting adjourned at 2:21 p.m.

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

Original Signed  
**Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk**