



Corporation of the City of
NEW WESTMINSTER

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

February 10, 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
Karen Campbell, Policy Planner, Development Services
Alison Ching, Recreation Leader, Parks & Recreation
Shelley Cole, Tenant Support Coordinator, Integrated Services
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, Development Services
Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Community Recreation, Parks & Recreation
Judith McLean, Peer Counselling, Century House
Constable Camille Oliveira, New Westminster Police Department
Paolo Zenone, Recreation Leader, Park & Recreation
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk, Legislative Services

Organizational Representatives:

Rick Bloudell, School District #40
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
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
Karl San Ramon, Seniors Services Society
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 but capture the discussion taking place during the meetings which may be used as a reference for the key issues addressed by the Task Forces.

Joint Task Force Items

3. Update on Standing Items

Task Force Web Portal and Weekly Email Update

Anur Mehdić, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, reminded members that the web portals, which are repositories of COVID resources and services, are updated regularly and include 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. Mehdić provided a recap of the weekly emails which also feature important COVID related resources and materials and noted that, in effort to make them more user friendly, the emails now include a coloured legend for the various sections.

Financial Resources Update

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, advised of the following:

- The Employment Insurance waiting period has been temporarily waived and applicants will now be paid for their first week of unemployment;
- New funding programs including:
 - The Supported Employment Recovery Fund;
 - The Canada Learning Bond Pilot Project;
 - The Sectorial Initiatives Program; and,

- A budget consultation questionnaire launched by the Federal Government regarding COVID recovery.

Tenant Resources Update

Karen Campbell, Policy Planner, advised that there are no updates and urged members to share information they may have that could update the Key Information and Resources for Tenants List.

Youth Services Update

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

- A Family Day Scavenger Hunt will be hosted with pre-registration required;
- The recent Youth Skate was sold out and other programs are filling up; and,
- The Youth Centre is busier now that Youth Services has access to New Westminster Secondary School.

Other Updates

Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Community Recreation, announced that 20 indoor and outdoor Family Day activity kits, which do not require digital access, are available and include a plant, finger knitting, origami, etc. She urged Task Force members to contact her if they knew of a family who would benefit from this kit.

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 Reaching Home (RH) grant components, which will see groceries, gift cards, hot meals, resource information, personal products, etc., shared throughout the community via St. Aidans Presbyterian Church, St. Barnabas Anglican Church, and Holy Trinity Cathedral, are being put in place;
- On Saturday, a dry run of the hot meal program will take place at St. Aidans Presbyterian Church with hot meals being served to those collecting their food hampers;
- In addition to the RH grant in the amount of \$101,000, which the City received to fund five food and resource hubs, a second RH grant for \$31,000 has been provided with \$9,000 of those proceeds going to the provision of portable toilets in the Uptown and Downtown and \$20,000 of the funding earmarked for the Elizabeth Fry Society, the Lower Mainland Purpose Society and the Union

Gospel Mission to assist them in meeting the needs of the street entrenched and precariously housed population; and,

- Work has commenced with MOSAIC on the Feeding the Homeless Project, as well as with the Seniors Services Society to make basic groceries available to the 45 to 60 year old age group as they may not meet other programs' criteria.

5. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, announced that there are 10 new extreme weather response mats available at the “Honeymoon Suite” located at 740 Carnarvon Street, that the Cliff Block is now offering 16 physically distanced beds 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and that the City continues work with BC Housing to increase shelter capacity. Mr. Stark advised that the extreme weather response mats will be available when temperatures go down to or feel like zero, noting that organizations will receive an alert when this happens.

In addition, the City also continues to work with BC Housing on the Emergency Response Centre (ERC), which would be open for approximately 18 months, during which a supportive housing facility will be developed for clients of the ERC to move into at the appropriate time.

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

- The Lower Mainland Purpose Society offered beds for vulnerable youth; however, they were underused as youth often couch surf or live temporarily with friends;
- New Westminster staff have recently reached out to the City of Burnaby in effort to reactivate the conversation regarding a safe house for youth;
- The Lookout Housing and Health Society should be informed of those requiring shelter in extreme weather conditions so they can be referred to a suitable shelter; and,
- Mr. Stark will reach out to the Lookout Housing and Health Society and the Union Gospel Mission regarding provisions, such as blankets coats and socks, for those outside.

6. Digital Inclusion Initiative Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised of Digital Inclusion Initiative updates, including:

- With government information and resources increasingly available online, at-risk and vulnerable populations have become disproportionately unable to access these supports;

- The Initiative is in partnership with Douglas College, the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, the City, and other organizations;
- Last week's report to Council provided an overview of the Initiative as well as an outline of the Initiative's three pillars which are: (1) Device Availability; (2) Internet Access; and, (3) Engagement, Educations, and Training;
- Council endorsed the donation of up to 25 decommissioned iPhone 7s to the Initiative; and,
- The Initiative has also received donations from a number of organizations such as BC Housing, SPARC of BC, etc., including five desktop computers.

Mr. Mehdic will contact the IT Department regarding the ability for community members to share information from the City's COVID Resources Web Portal and will further discuss this item with Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC/Lived Experience after the meeting.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that some Healthy Community Grant funding may also be used to support the Initiative.

At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force Items

7. Access to Laundry and Showers Initiative

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised of feedback received regarding the need for shower and laundry facilities, both of which are difficult for the street entrenched to access right now. He noted that \$4,000 of Reaching Home funding will provide support for a laundry program with the Lookout Housing and Health Society which may allow people to drop off their laundry for cleaning and/or provide vouchers to have their laundry done. It is hoped that the program will start within the next two weeks.

Mr. Stark shared that work is ongoing with the Parks and Recreation Department to provide access to showers at the Canada Games Pool during set times, possibly on Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m., with men and women accessing the facility separately. He stated that staff may also work with the Lookout Housing and Health Society to provide transportation or bus passes to individuals desirous of accessing the showers, that names will be collected for contact tracing and, upon arrival at the facility, clients will receive a courtesy bag containing a towel, shampoo, soap, toothbrush, granola bar, etc. It is anticipated that the shower program will be running by the week of February 22, 2021; however, there are still details to be worked out for both programs.

7. Health Contact Centre (Overdose Prevention Site) Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded members that the Lower Mainland Purpose Society was selected as the non-profit operator for the Health Contact Centre (HCC) and they have applied for a three-year Temporary Use Permit (TUP) which, if approved by Council, is expected to be complete by March 31, 2021, and would include a three year renewal option. Mr. Stark noted that details regarding an upcoming public information session will be shared with Task Force members who were also encouraged to write to Council and senior staff to express their support and/or concerns regarding the HCC.

Mr. Stark advised that the HCC will provide witnessed consumption, risk mitigation, drug testing, and access to other health resources and will conduct neighbourhood sweeps for discarded needles. He acknowledged that the pandemic has had an impact on mental health resulting in a steep increase in drug overdoses.

Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society/NWOCAT, shared that two peers are on the streets every night to try to reduce overdose deaths and to facilitate access to harm reduction supplies. She advised that the Centre will have four staff, as well as a supervisor, on site from 3:00 to 11:00 p.m., one of whom will be a peer support worker, and that ongoing community engagement will facilitate relationship building with the business community and residents.

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, reminded members that the weekly emails includes a link to the Be Heard New West site which contains additional information on the HCC as well as the option to submit comments.

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

Discussion ensued regarding the feasibility of the City providing a warming centre to house the street entrenched population during extreme cold weather events and John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that considerations to be made in implementing a warming centre would include staffing, volunteers, and possibly working with a non-profit organization such as the Lookout Housing and Health Society or Fraserside Community Services Society.

During the meeting, Mr. Stark reached out to appropriate senior staff to determine if the City could facilitate a warming centre, including which civic venues may be suitable and available for such use.

Mr. Stark thanked Constable Oliveira for raising this issue with the Task Forces.

9. Member Updates

No updates were received.

Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities Task Force Items

Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, Century House, assumed the Chair.

10. Friendly Support Caller Program

Alison Ching, Recreation Leader, shared that the Program now has a total of 15 volunteers and 29 clients with one on the waitlist. She noted that from January 27 to February 10, 2021, a total of 27 calls were made over 439 minutes, averaging 15.2 minutes per call.

Ms. Ching noted that two clients have recently left the Program as one is now in hospice care and other was no longer in need of the support calls. In addition, the volunteer meetings are now held on a monthly basis with email updates shared in between meetings.

Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, Century House, advised that Judith McLean, Peer Counselling, Century House, is new to the position and will provide seniors peer counselling information at a future meeting.

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

Constable Oliveira announced that, in response to the recent and tragic home invasion of a senior, Shelly Schnee, Program Coordinator, Century House, will be hosting a virtual safety talk on Friday, March 9, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. She noted that additional information will be provided in the Clarion Newsletter.

12. Member Updates

- As the Seniors Services Society (SSS) will not be hosting a tax clinic this year, people are being referred to Family Services of Greater Vancouver, ACORN, etc., for tax assistance;
- SSS continues to provide aid to people from all municipalities applying for the BC Recovery Benefit; and,
- Details of Century House's upcoming tax clinic will be included in the Resources List.

Next Step & Meeting Schedule

13. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, thanked everyone for their feedback and advised that, in the interest of efficiency as staff move back into supporting roles with regular City advisory committees, the joint meetings of the Task Forces will now be held every three weeks. He noted that the joint meetings have been beneficial to both Task Forces with the resource information shared between them and advised that meetings may increase again if the pandemic worsens due to variants of the virus.

The next joint meeting of the Task Forces will be held on Wednesday, March 3, 2021.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Original Signed _____
John Stark, Co-Chair

Original Signed _____
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk