



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**

January 27, 2021 at 1:00 p.m., Committee Room 2 – City Hall/GoToMeeting
(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
Constable Camille Oliveira, New Westminister 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 Westminister Family Place
Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Manor
Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC/Lived Experience
Tim Hicks, Century House
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
Pat Steiner, Family Services of Greater Vancouver
Rocio Vasquez, Family Service of Greater Vancouver
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 Pending

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that the minutes are not verbatim and are meant to allow those who may have missed a meeting to catch up.

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 staff continue to develop the Web Portal resource lists which 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. Mehdic noted that the weekly emails include the information about the resources listed above as well as information regarding upcoming events, City surveys, pertinent reports, etc.

Financial Resources Update

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, advised that while Revenue Canada's Efile services is currently offline for updates and is reopening on Monday, February 22, 2021, they are still accepting paper tax returns. Mr. Johnson noted, however, that it may still be faster for people to wait until the Efile system is online again to file tax returns. He stated that Family Services of Greater Vancouver is providing assistance to those who require assistance filing their tax returns.

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, announced a new grant available for non-profits through Second Harvest Food Security Fund for which

applications could be submitted starting on February 1, 2021. He noted that \$8 million dollars in funding will be available for disbursement and that additional information will be provided in the follow-up email.

Tenant Resources Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised that there was nothing new to share at this time; however, staff will continue to monitor for updates.

Youth Services Update

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

- Regular drop in sessions and events continue at the Youth Centre, including the addition of a Friday drop in session for middle school youth at Century House;
- Youth Services is pleased to now be running activities out of New Westminster Secondary School's common area; and,
- A Leaders in Training program is being offered for youth interested in working for the City.

Financial Resources Update

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, advised that Census Canada is currently hiring to fill short term positions which may be appropriate for those who are permitted to work part time while receiving government benefits. Mr. Johnson urged members to share this information with their clients.

4. Food Security Plans Update

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

- Work is being done with St. Aidans Presbyterian Church, St. Barnabas Anglican Church, and Holy Trinity Cathedral to ensure that the Reaching Home funding, which needs to be spent by March 31, 2021, will meet the needs of the community. There may be a future intake of Reaching Home funding, with funds starting on April 1, 2021;
- The three aforementioned churches will become Food Security and Resource Hubs, offering an array of services funded through the \$101,000 Reaching Home grant;
- This week, along with the Digital Inclusion Initiative group and St. Aidans Presbyterian Church, testing will take place to determine how the expansion of

free Wifi at the church can be provided as this would impact how people register and access programs online while they are outside; and,

- In December 2020, the City applied for a second Reaching Home grant for approximately \$31,000, with \$9,000 of that amount earmarked to cover the cost of portable toilets, which are in limited supply in the city, and with the balance of the funding to go to the Union Gospel Mission, the Elizabeth Fry Society, and the Lower Mainland Purpose Society to assist with outreach services such as food security and supplies for the street entrenched community. Staff expect to hear about the second grant application tomorrow.

5. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that since the closure of the Emergency Response Centre (ERC) located at the Massey Gymnasium, there has been a deficit of shelter beds in New Westminster. He reminded members that the City continues to work alongside BC Housing in negotiations on a lease for a new ERC location which may require a Temporary Use Permit. He noted that the new ERC would offer 40 to 50 beds to accommodate people who would then transition to the supportive, longer term housing units that the City is also working on supplying with BC Housing. Additional updates regarding the ERC are expected in the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Stark noted that the City, in collaboration with BC Housing and Lookout Housing and Health Society, has realized 10 Extreme Weather Response (EWR) mats at the Russell Housing Centre at 740 Carnarvon Street. The EWR mats will be in effect until March 31, 2021.

Mr. Stark informed members that the Survival Resources Guide would be updated with the EWR mats and reminded the group that when an Extreme Weather Alert goes out, it includes a notice for organizations to post on their exterior doors and windows.

At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force Items

6. Access to Showers Initiative

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that the need for shower access has come to the attention of staff who have worked together to secure access to shower facilities at the Canada Games Pool (CGP). He noted that individuals could book a shower time for themselves, or an organization could do so on their behalf and, upon arrival at the facility, they would receive a mask, towel, soap, and shampoo. As well, individuals would also have the option of taking a swim at the CGP, if they have a swim suite. It is anticipated that this initiative will commence in early-March 2021 and it is hoped that bus tickets will also be supplied to assist people in getting to the

shower facilities. Phone numbers for those utilizing the showers will be kept for contact tracing.

Discussion ensued and members provided the following comments:

- This initiative is very welcome as a lot of people are requesting access to showers;
- Suggestions for other items that could be included in the shower packages include granola bars, a disposable toothbrush, tooth paste, and a rain poncho;
- It is important that patrons are able to dry off completely after showering before they head back out into the elements; and,
- Clean clothes are an important aspect of personal hygiene; therefore, access to laundry facilities is also a much needed resource for this community.

Mr. Stark shared that items such as socks, underwear, feminine hygiene products, etc., will be disseminated through the Food Security and Resources Hubs as part of the Reaching Home grant; however, it can be coordinated through Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, that some of these items be included in the packages offered at the shower facilities.

7. Health Contact Centre (Overdose Prevention Site) Update

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, announced that the Lower Mainland Purpose Society was selected as the non-profit operator for the proposed Health Contact Centre (HCC) at 40 Begbie Street, noting that the new use for the site will require a Temporary Use Permit (TUP). As well, the City has launched a webpage for the HCC to provide information to and receive information from residents, and that a virtual information session will be held on February 17, 2021.

Mr. Stark reminded members that the HCC will be a community resource, not just for the street entrenched, and will, amongst other things, offer drug and health checks. He advised that the City is sharing a lot of information on the HCC and the TUP with the community and that the Lower Mainland Purpose Society and Fraser Health will also be sharing information.

Task Force members were invited to share their comments about the HCC and the TUP with Council and staff by way of the webpage or email.

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

Further to the discussion under Item 6: Access to Showers Initiative, John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, stated that staff will begin addressing the potential to provide laundry facility access to the street entrenched community.

9. Member Updates

No updates were provided.

Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities Task Force Items

10. Friendly Support Caller Program

Alison Ching, Recreation Leader, shared that the Program now has a total of 15 volunteers and 31 clients with one on the waitlist. She noted that from January 12 to 26, 2021, a total of 32 calls were made over 730 minutes, averaging 22.8 minutes per call.

Ms. Ching advised that a wellness check was conducted for a client whose phone was broken leaving their volunteer caller unable to get in touch with them. She noted that many of their clients have questions about the vaccine rollout and whether or not they will have to register themselves or if someone will contact them about it, and that volunteers are sharing information about the BC Recovery Benefit.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, advised that staff are awaiting a response from Fraser Health with respect to front line workers/volunteers receiving vaccinations and if they will be prioritized. Betina Wheeler, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, noted that, per the Public Health Officer, front line workers may be able to receive vaccinations between May and July 2021, depending on vaccine availability at that time.

Mr. Stark advised that Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, will follow up on the vaccine rollout plans and report back to the Task Forces.

Mr. Johnson stated that those with health conditions may be eligible for vaccines regardless of their age and advised members to see if their clients fit into this category.

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

- Staff will work with the IT Department to ensure that resource information located on the City's website is as accessible as possible as well as adding a WiFi hotspot list to the website;
- A report will be going to Council regarding the Digital Inclusion Initiative that will outline training, device availability, WiFi access, etc.;

- Century House’s Seniors Embracing Technology (SET) group will be involved in the Digital Inclusion Initiative meetings, where they will hear about smart home technology as a possible option for seniors to stay safe;
- The Finance Department is looking into offering more online services and more varied payment options. Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, will report back on this at an upcoming meeting; and,
- An accessible parking list is currently being worked on.

12. Member Updates

No updates were provided.

Next Step & Meeting Schedule

13. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, thanked everyone and advised that the next meeting of the Task Forces will be held on Wednesday, February 10, 2021.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Original Signed

John Stark, Co-Chair

Original Signed

Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk