

## **COVID-19: AT-RISK & VULNERABLE POPULATIONS TASK FORCE Minutes**

**May 27, 2020 at 1:00 p.m., Committee Room 2 – City Hall**

*(Due to precautionary health measures, only City staff are permitted to personally attend meetings)*

**PRESENT (in Person):**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning/Chair  
Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst  
Rob Dick, Assistant Deputy Fire Chief  
Dylan Myers, Acting Emergency Support Services (ESS) Chief Deputy  
Mike Antoniali, Acting ESS Operations Coordinator  
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk

**PRESENT (via Teleconference):**

***Staff:***

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner  
Shelley Cole, Bylaw Officer, Tenant Support Coordinator  
Diana McDaniel, Inspector, New Westminster Police Department  
Wendy Bowyer, Vulnerable Persons Liaison Officer  
Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Centennial Community Centre  
Karen Campbell, Policy Planner  
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst  
Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, Century House  
Silisha Ali, Youth Program Coordinator  
Ryan Weber, Program Coordinator, Queensborough Community Centre

***Organizational Representatives:***

Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction  
Linda Fletcher-Gordon, Lower Mainland Purpose Society  
Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society  
Betina Wheeler, New West Homelessness Coalition Society  
Leonard Levy, Lookout Housing and Health Society  
Sukhdeep Jassar, Fraser Health  
Kaley Merritt, Westminster House Society  
Ingrid Timmermans, Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice  
Melita Caissie, Fraserside Community Services Society  
Rick Bloudell, School District #40  
Fay Duxbury, New West Family Place  
Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral  
Lorrie Wasyliw, Monarch Place (WINGS)

The meeting convened at 1:00 p.m.

## **1. Introductions**

Task Force members introduced themselves.

## **2. Review of Draft Minutes**

No comments were received.

## **3. Update on Actions Taken Since Meeting of April 29, 2020**

### *Tenant Support Resources*

Karen Campbell, Policy Planner, shared that staff have developed a tenant resource document that can be viewed on the City's website and will be updated as needed. The document has also been emailed to Acorn BC and the New West Tenants' Union, published in the New West Record the last two Thursdays and, through the New West Police Department, the information, along with the Food Resource Calendar, has been sent to 85 residential buildings in the city.

### *Youth Services*

Ryan Weber, Program Coordinator, shared the following updates:

- The Youth Services resource document has been completed and will soon be shared with Task Force members and distributed to various locations; and,
- Work continues with the School District, maintaining communication with the schools, as new needs for students have arisen with respect to the increasingly good weather, the start of in-class schooling, etc. with a plan in creation to support those needs with drop-ins, online programming, outreach, etc.

### *Financial Supports*

Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, encouraged Task Force members to check the growing resource list frequently as it is updated weekly.

### *City Engagement Plan*

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, announced that on May 11<sup>th</sup> Council passed a motion directing staff to create public engagement strategy to include the community in the COVID-19 recovery plan and, as such, Task Force members may receive an email from Jennifer Miller, Manager of Public Engagement, with guiding principles and objectives for review and comment. Mr. Mehdic added that staff will

include this with other initiatives being worked on, such as those addressing the demands being placed on faith and non-profit organizations.

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, added that, also playing into the engagement strategy, is the City's partnership with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition on a Community Action Network which will include a series of training workshops for those with lived experience around poverty and homelessness. This training will teach staff how to effectively engage this community, aid in the development of an engagement guide, and those who graduate from the program will sit on City committees to assist with policy development, etc.

#### **4. Food Security Plans Update**

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, and John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, shared food security plan updates including:

- The Province, through the Pacific Region Emergency Operations Centre, will no longer be funding the Lookout and Purpose Daily Sandwich Program; however, staff took a report to Council on May 25<sup>th</sup> and were able to secure interim funding for the program until July 10, 2020. As well, funding was secured to engage the Coordinator of the Homelessness Coalition Society to oversee food security responses for six months starting June 1<sup>st</sup> and to work with staff on the development of a pilot food security strategy;
- The St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church Food Program is running from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, with the first half hour reserved to serve seniors and those with disabilities;
- The Lookout and Purpose Society Sandwich Program gives out approximately 75 sandwiches per day and the St. Barnabas Anglican Church Hamper Program distributes 150 hampers weekly;
- There is expected to be a significant increase in food insecurity with the economic restructuring associated with the pandemic and as federal and provincial assistance ends; therefore, securing as much continued support and funding as possible, especially if there is a second wave of the pandemic, is very important.

The Venerable Richard Leggett, Holy Trinity Cathedral, confirmed the Cathedral will be offering Saturday morning take-away brunches, starting at 11:00 a.m. on May 30<sup>th</sup>.

#### **5. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, provided the following information regarding the Emergency Response Centre (ERC), which was opened on May 11<sup>th</sup> at the Massey Theatre Complex:

- The ERC will be managed by Lookout Housing and Health Society and have security and staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week;
- Modifications were made to the Massey Complex to accommodate the ERC which can house 40 men and women in physical distancing pods which include beds, night tables, Wi-Fi, etc.;
- Those referred to the ERC are screened for the virus prior to placement and streamlining the referral and intake process is being looked into; and,
- Lookout Housing and Health Society and BC Housing are striving to ease any concerns that parents may have with school re-starting on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **6. Social Inclusion Initiative**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, reminded members of the Social Inclusion Initiative with Douglas College and the Lower Mainland Purpose Society wherein donations of phones, tablets, and laptops are being sought to be provided to the at-risk and vulnerable population in an effort to keep them connected to resources, which are increasingly accessible online, and their support systems. Mr. Stark noted that the City will provide marketing support to secure more devices and is looking at providing Wi-Fi and hotspots.

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised of a short survey which commenced two weeks ago regarding digital inclusion and the role that organizations play with respect to computer access and free Wi-Fi, noting that a good number of responses to the survey have been received. A link to the survey will be included in the post meeting email and members were urged to complete and share the survey with their network.

Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, announced the launch of a new app called Lifeguard to aid in the prevention of overdoses. The app is being downloaded to smartphones that are received through the Social Inclusion Initiative.

## **7. Identification of Other Issues**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, shared that he received an email suggesting that carts or buggies be provided for those accessing food security programs to assist them with getting their groceries home since some individuals are reluctant to take public transit which will again start charging fares on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **8. Member Updates**

### *Staff Updates*

- Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Centennial Community Centre, announced that the City, along with Kids New West, which is a multi-sector group committed

to supporting vulnerable children and families in the city, will be putting together 100 resource and activity bags for the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and families using the food bank and be ready for June 11<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Manzer encouraged organizations interested in receiving some of these bags which contain a resource booklet, family and kid craft supplies, indoor and outdoor activity suggestions, maps of new west parks, etc., to contact staff with their request. In addition, the City has also provided 100 emergency preparedness grab and go bags which hold toothpaste/brush, blanket, flashlight, etc.; and,

- Anur Mehdić, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised of a new Canadian Red Cross Emergency Support for Community Organizations Fund of \$50 million to support charities and non-profit organizations serving vulnerable populations who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

### *External Member Updates*

- Linda Fletcher-Gordon, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, announced that the Society has secured funding for a housing case manager and a support person. She advised that, along with the rent bank, this will become a solid program with funds leftover to assist with a housing subsidy, utilities, etc., if needed, and noted that both positions will be posted today with interviews expected to start next week; and,
- Rick Bloudell, School District #40, reminded members that starting on June 1<sup>st</sup> there will be an optional return to school for students with continued support for those who prefer remote learning. He also shared that the lunch program is ongoing.

In response to a Task Force member's enquiry regarding the restart expectations and guidelines of community groups such as AA, etc., as well as daycares and preschools who utilize churches and other community venues, Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, will provide this information at the next meeting.

## **9. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule**

Task Force members were reminded to send agenda items to Anur Mehdić, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst.

The next meeting of the Task Force will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 10, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Original Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
**John Stark**  
**Chair**

Original Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
**Carilyn Cook**  
**Committee Clerk**