

COVID-19: AT-RISK & VULNERABLE POPULATIONS TASK FORCE

Minutes

May 6, 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
Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner
Nazanin Esmaeili, Planning Assistant
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:

Shelley Cole, Bylaw Officer, Tenant Support Coordinator
Diana McDaniel, Inspector, New Westminister Police Department
Camille Oliveira, Constable, New Westminister Police Department
Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Centennial Community Centre
Karen Campbell, Policy Planner
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst
Silisha Ali, Youth Program Coordinator
Ryan Weber, Program Coordinator, Queensborough Community Centre

Organizational Representatives:

Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Edith Tazumi, Union Gospel Mission
Linda Fletcher-Gordon, Lower Mainland Purpose Society
Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society
Lorrie Wasyliw, Monarch Place (WINGS)
Betina Wheeler, New West Homelessness Coalition Society
Leonard Levy, Lookout Housing and Health Society
Dave Brown, Lookout Housing and Health Society
Shamina Kallu, Lookout Housing and Health Society
Sukhdeep Jassar, Fraser Health
Allison Luke, New West Mental Health and Addictions Centre
Kaley Merritt, Westminster House Society
Ingrid Timmermans, Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice
Rick Bloudell, School District #40
Fay Duxbury, New West Family Place

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 the new tenant resource document will be available online by the end of day tomorrow and that a listing of tenant resources will be published in the May 14th edition of the New Westminster Record.

Youth Services

Ryan Weber, Program Coordinator, shared the following updates:

- Virtual Youth Week is now underway; however, it has not garnered as much participation as was hoped;
- Work continues on resources for youth and sharing resource information in the windows of the Youth Centre; and,
- Today, staff initiated a connection with the School District and their youth workers to facilitate increasing connections with at-risk youth.

Drop-off Tax Filing Services

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

- The library website now includes a link to the Century House Community Volunteer Tax Preparation Program for those 60+ and persons with disabilities, and staff continue to work on securing assistance for those who may not qualify for this Program;
- Committee members were reminded to contact Lisa Paterson, Community Development Worker, Ministry of Children and Family Development, at 778-874-8827 if they know of anyone who can help out with this initiative; and,
- The Provincial Government announced the phased re-opening of businesses which may make these tax programs more easily accessible.

Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, clarified that non-filing of taxes will not affect income assistance received by their clients.

4. Food Security Plans Update

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

- The Vancouver Foundation grant application on behalf of St. Barnabas Anglican Church was successful and resulted in a \$50,000 grant to fund their Grab and Go Food Program;
- Staff are awaiting an update regarding a Vancouver Foundation grant application submitted on behalf of St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church to support their Saturday grocery program;
- The sandwich program run by the Lower Mainland Purpose Society continues to be successful. As well, the Society's hamper program has approximately 75 hampers delivered weekly to those in need;
- The City's hamper program, which is run with the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society, saw 150 hampers delivered to various organizations today; and,
- Staff are working with the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society on the recovery stage of COVID-19 and seeking continued support of food security programs as we move out of the pandemic, including sustainable funding and resources to assist the programs as City staff transition to their regular jobs.

5. Shelter and Temporary Housing Update

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, informed members that the announcement of the location of the Emergency Response Centre is expected in the next couple of days and that the goal is to have it operational during the week of May 11th, noting that notification will be sent to businesses and residences adjacent to the shelter. Mr. Stark also shared the following information:

- The shelter will house approximately 40 people, 19 years of age or older, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through a referral process;
- As the shelter will be co-ed, steps will be taken to ensure female residents feel safe and protected;
- An experienced non-profit operator will manage the shelter and there will be health and harm reduction services, including an overdose prevention site;
- Physical distancing requirements will be maintained, with potential for on-site COVID-19 testing. Those who test positive will likely be placed in a hotel, possibly in another municipality due to the limited hotel spaces in the city;
- Staff will continue to raise the issue of safe shelter for youth with BC Housing; and,

- Once the temporary emergency shelter is in the place, the Extreme Weather Response Shelter, which is run at the Cliff Block, will not be operational until November 1st at the earliest.

In response to a question from a Task Force member, staff will follow-up as to a testing centre or site to serve at-risk and vulnerable populations, including the homeless. Ingrid Timmermans, Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice, stated that she will also follow-up on this inquiry.

6. Digital Inclusion Initiative

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, reminded Task Force members of the Digital 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 and their support systems. Mr. Stark noted that with libraries and businesses being closed, barriers to online resources have increased. The devices will be preprogrammed and access to Wi-Fi hot spots in the community is currently being secured with the City's IT Department, TELUS, and Shaw.

Next steps include a report going to Council on Monday with staff seeking endorsement and direction from Council to provide communication support to source devices, and to explore the creation of Wi-Fi hot spots.

Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, announced that in the next couple of weeks they will begin a trial of two phones that have been set up for use.

7. Identification of Other Issues

- Courtney Pankratz of the Lower Mainland Purpose Society will share protocol information for staff patrollers with respect to responding to possible overdoses;
- Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst, advised of the recently announced fire season forecast noting that it should be kept in mind with respect to how the air quality may affect those already experiencing respiratory issues due to the COVID-19 virus; and,
- Lorrie Wasyliw of Monarch Place (WINGS) shared that Sleep Country Canada has committed to helping our vulnerable populations and, after the meeting, she will share information regarding how to apply for a donation of mattresses, bedframes, etc.

8. Member Updates

Staff Update

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared, on behalf of Lisa Paterson, Community Development Worker, Ministry of Children and Family Development, that the New Westminster Child and Youth Mental Health Team is providing intake and treatment services during this time of physical distancing, adding that those needing these services can call 604-660-9495 to speak with a clinician.

External Member Update

The United Church of Canada continues to offer online support through their Good Vibrations Program.

9. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

Dylan Myers, Acting Emergency Support Services (ESS) Chief Deputy advised that resource requests, including personal protective equipment, have not been approved by the Southwest Regional PREOC. He shared that staff will continue to pursue other measures over the next couple of weeks.

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, advised that Lisa Spitale, CAO, has been informed of this issue, noting that it will also be brought to the attention of Council and, as the requests are COVID-19 related, staff are confident there is a case to be made for their approval.

The next meeting of the Task Force will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 1:46 p.m.

Original Signed
John Stark
Chair

Original Signed
Carilyn Cook
Committee Clerk