

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

## **Minutes**

**April 15, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.  
Room 401, Anvil Centre**

*(In order to undertake precautionary health measures and practice safe social distancing,  
only City staff are permitted to attend the meeting in person.)*

### **PRESENT (in Person):**

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning/Chair  
Mike Antoniali, Acting ESS Operations Coordinator  
Rob Dick, Assistant Deputy Fire Chief  
Nazanin Esmaeli, Planning Assistant  
Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner  
Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst  
Dylan Myers, Acting Emergency Support Services Chief Deputy

### **PRESENT (via Teleconference):**

Staff:

Karen Campbell, Planner  
Tristan Johnson, Senior Planning Analyst  
Ramona Manzer, Program Coordinator, Centennial Community Centre  
Diana McDaniel, Inspector, New Westminister Police Department  
Camille Oliveira, Constable, New Westminister Police Department  
Ryan Webber, Program Coordinator, Queensborough Community Centre

Organizational Representatives:

Mavis Brownlee, St. Barnabas Church  
Melita Caissie, Fraserside Community Services Society  
Linda Fletcher-Gordon, Lower Mainland Purpose Society for Youth and Families  
Sukhdeep Jassar, Fraser Health  
Shamina Kallu, Lookout Housing and Health Society  
Kimiko Karpoff, United Church of Canada  
Allison Luke, Fraser Health Mental Health and Addictions Centre  
Kaley Merritt, Westminister House Society  
Carol Neilson, Holy Trinity Cathedral  
Courtney Pankratz, Lower Mainland Purpose Society  
Shannon Patrick, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Raj, Umbrella Multicultural Health Co-op  
Kyoko Takahashi, Seniors Services Society  
Edith Tazumi, Union Gospel Mission  
Lorrie Wasyliw, Monarch Place (WINGS)  
Betina Wheeler, New West Homelessness Coalition Society

The meeting convened at 1:00 p.m.

## **1. Introductions**

Task Force members introduced themselves.

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

John Stark spoke to the purpose and form of the meeting minutes and noted that they were a summary and not verbatim. No comments were received. He requested that any requests for changes to the meeting minutes be sent to Anur Mehdic.

## **3. Update on Actions Taken Since Meeting of April 8, 2020**

Staff provided the following updates:

- Task Force Web Portal: Anur Mehdic gave an update on the continued work on the Task Force web portal, including adding minutes from previous meetings and trusted links and resources.
- Resource Request Form: John Stark emphasized the importance of the resource request form. He reminded members to provide a detailed description of the product or service being requested and a rationale as to why it is being requested, including linking it to the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that financial assistance, such as direct funding, cannot be requested. Anur Mehdic will be sending out the link to the resource request form again after this meeting concludes.
- Survival Guide and Food Calendar: Claudia Freire reported that a revised Survival Guide and Food Calendar were forwarded to Task Force members. She requested updates from members and mentioned that she would send the updated documents weekly (more often when changes have been made).

## **4. Food Security Update**

Claudia Freire provided an update on the Supper Program at the Century House parking lot that is now operational, including the importance of promoting this new program. John Stark discussed the possibility of scaling up the program if demand warranted. Claudia Freire and Courtney Pankratz are continuing to work on food programming plans by neighbourhood/sub-area, with a current focus on Sapperton and the West End. Claudia Freire provided an update on the Food Hamper program for seniors, persons with

disabilities, people in social isolation, and other people who have challenges accessing the food bank.

Courtney Pankratz provided an update on the sandwich and lunch bag delivery services through the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, with assistance from the City and Greens and Beans. She also provided an update on the demographics of people accessing this program, including increasing numbers of seniors and residents from the Brow of the Hill, Downtown and Uptown neighbourhoods. John Stark provided an update on surveying users of the Supper Program to determine if there are any unmet needs.

Discussion ensued on food programs. John Stark mentioned that the Supper Program at the Century House parking lot was open to all residents in need. Betina Wheeler recommended that food program information be posted in additional places and that links be provided as to where to access this information on the City's website. Linda Fletcher-Gordon provided an update on Purpose Society Hamper program to meet the specific food needs of clients, including a delivery service.

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

John Stark provided an update as to housing needs. He noted that BC Housing did a survey of the street entrenched population and is looking at creating a temporary shelter that could house up to 50 individuals. BC Housing has inspected three civic facilities to determine which facility would be the best location for this temporary shelter. More information on the facility decision should be available by next week's Task Force meeting. Some of the services that could be available at the temporary shelter include primary health services and harm reduction supports.

John Stark gave an update on the feasibility of the Corporate Inn as a location for the street entrenched population to self-isolate if they are symptomatic or if they test positive but do not require hospitalization. The Corporate Inn is unavailable for this purpose due to cost challenges associated with retrofitting it. BC Housing is looking at options for hotel accommodations to enable this population to self-isolate, with more information on this item being available possibly by next week's Task Force meeting.

## **6. Overdose Prevention Initiatives**

John Stark discussed overdose prevention initiatives in relation to a new temporary shelter and noted that this will be the focus during the pandemic, with potential to look at the initiatives after the pandemic (e.g., an overdose prevention site to serve the community). Linda Fletcher-Gordon discussed the importance of continued work on a safe drug supply after the pandemic ends and the importance of a warming centre.

## **7. Peer Mentorship Program**

Courtney Pankratz described the peer mentorship program, which is an overdose prevention program to reduce incidence of overdoses and overdose deaths, including the roles of first responders. She also described the coordination of the program through Lower Mainland Purpose Society and Lookout Housing and Health Society and how to contact peers.

Linda Fletcher-Gordon recommended the potential use of peers through the peer mentorship program in the temporary shelter that will be established. Discussion ensued with questions about the peer mentorship program, including eligibility and demographics.

## **8. Updated Faith and Non-Profit Survey**

John Stark discussed the Faith and Non-Profit Survey, which was sent out to organizations a month ago, with some responses received. The survey will be sent out again, with additional questions about recovery of organizations after the pandemic. He discussed partnering with the Business and Local Economy Task Force to administer the survey. City staff will be researching the faith and non-profit sector to identify needs and assisting with advocacy to the senior levels of government.

Anur Mehdic discussed the purpose of the survey and what information could be gathered through it, requesting that non-profit organizations complete it once it, which should occur as soon as possible. John Stark mentioned that City staff will conduct a pre- and post-pandemic environmental scan of faith and non-profit organizations, including potentially conducting key informant interviews.

Betina Wheeler requested that questions related to food security (specifically, the Food Security Action Plan) be included in the survey.

## **9. Identification of Other Issues**

Shower and Laundry Facilities: there are challenges related to accessing shower and laundry facilities, including physical distancing requirements and safety. Lower Mainland Purpose Society offers showering facilities but it is limited to one person an hour. It was suggested that civic facilities be made available for this purpose. It was also suggested that a private laundry facility could be leased or rented to meet the need for laundry services.

Warming and Drop-in Centres: the need for warming and drop-in centres for the homeless to come in off the street, get dry, and have a hot soup or snack was raised.

St. Barnabas Grocery Program: the distribution of groceries at St Barnabas was discussed, including resources from the City such as traffic cones and sidewalk chalk to assist with physical distancing requirements.

Social Connectedness: it was noted that while there are a number of efforts to meet the basic needs of the food insecure and homeless, there is not much emphasis being placed on providing them with hope. It was suggested that consideration be given to connecting people through virtual means and reminding them that they are important, including through cards and letters. Regarding the latter, this could involve students.

Supply Needs: the need for baby formula and diapers, and the assistance in distributing supplies was discussed. Donations of goods and financial assistance from corporations and organizations that have been received was also discussed. Additionally, the need for feminine hygiene products and pet food was identified. John Stark reminded member to complete the resource request form.

Grant Opportunities: John Stark discussed grant opportunities through the Vancouver Foundation and United Way of the Lower Mainland that could assist in meeting community needs.

## **10. Member Updates**

Member updates included but were not limited to:

- Shannon Patrick reported that the extra \$300 for income and disability assistance will be issued from the Provincial Government, as well as additional case-by-case assistance for extenuating circumstances. She discussed the ability of Ministry staff to drop-off cheques directly to shelters so that guests do not have to come into a Ministry office.
- Anur Mehdic provided an update for the School District: The District is moving forward with food security support for families, including lunches prepared by school culinary students. The District is also providing weekly grocery gift cards for families and has opened up child care facilities for essential workers at five of its school sites.
- Carol Neilson reported that Holy Trinity Cathedral is working on re-activating its breakfast program. She also reported that they are keeping in touch with volunteers through weekly phone calls.
- Lorrie Wasyilaw reported that Monarch Place staff and residents received testing for COVID-19.
- Lynda Fletcher-Gordon thanked the Fire Department for their water and food deliveries to their organization.
- Edith Tazumi reported that the Union Gospel Mission has established a weekly newsletter, which provides information on services. She also reported that hygiene

kits, including rain ponchos, have been distributed to guests. There are surplus rain ponchos if other organizations need them.

- Betina Wheeler reported that the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society is continuing to do regular website updates.
- Ryan Weber discussed resources for youth, including a virtual platform for checking in with youth in regards to mental health.
- Diana MacDaniel received a large amount of sparkling water and would like to distribute it to organizations in need. Organizations can request this sparkling water through resource request form.

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

The next meeting is on Wednesday, April 22, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

Original Signed

**John Stark**  
**Chair**

Original Signed

**Tristan Johnson**  
**Senior Planning Analyst**