

**COVID-19: SENIORS &
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
TASK FORCE**

Minutes

**March 26, 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):

Rob Dick, Assistant Deputy Fire Chief/Chair
Dylan Myers, Acting Emergency Support Services Chief Deputy
John Stark, Supervisor Community Planning
Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst
Jim Luu, Assistant Manager, Queens Park Concessions
Paolo Zenone, Recreation Leader
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk

PRESENT (via Teleconference):

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner
Nazanin Esmaeili, Planning Assistant
Christine Edward, Transportation Planner
Alison Ching, Recreation Leader
Liz Twaites, Volunteer Coordinator
Shelly Schnee, Seniors Program Coordinator
Alison Silgado, Seniors Services Society
Calvin Donnelly, Sapperton Old Age Pensioners' Association
Camellia Veliciu, Rotary Tower
Daisy, Mosiac Seniors
Donna MacLean, Queensborough 50+ Social Club
Carole Wylie, Century House Association
Janice Barr, Community Living Society
Kay Johnson, New West Hospice Society
Linda Bilinsk, Dunwood Place
Mariam Larson, Consultant, Mariam Larson Inc.
Ron Rolland, Legion Manor
Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Manor
Tim Hicks, Century House
Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC
Val Macdonald, Community Member

The meeting convened at 1:04 p.m.

1. Introductions

Task Force members introduced themselves.

2. Review of Draft Terms of Reference

Rob Dick, Assistant Deputy Fire Chief, reviewed the draft Terms of Reference with Task Force members and posed the following questions:

Is the mandate clear and are there any suggested revisions or additions?

- Other personal expenses not accounted for such as medications, etc., should be added since most are on a fixed income;
- Consideration of access to WiFi with respect to businesses closing; and,
- Hub support for homecare providers.

Are there additional working group responsibilities that should be considered?

- Once information is received with respect to the size and needs of the population, a profile for the Task Force will be created and responses will be tailored to the needs of the community; and,
- Regarding transportation for seniors, another task force is working on this issue and some businesses are already making accommodations for seniors; however, this group can look at grocery and prescription pick-up and delivery to determine if there may be roles for staff to assist in getting essentials to individuals.

Are there organizations that are missing and critical to the functioning of the working group?

- Members were encouraged to contact Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Analyst, if anyone else should be invited to join the Task Force, noting that the group is under-represented by those with disabilities.

3. Introduction of Consultant – Mariam Larson

Mariam Larson introduced herself and shared that she is a gerontologist whose current concern is to provide support and response to the needs of the community. She also expressed concern for those who may not have previously been connected to social

agencies but now find themselves in need of them and unsure how to navigate their way through the system.

Rob Dick, Assistant Deputy Fire Chief, requested a volunteer to fill the Task Force's Alternate Chair position.

4. Update on the At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning reviewed the Terms of Reference of the At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force and explained that the two groups were separated in order to better address the needs of both, with the acknowledgement that some issues may overlap.

5. Actions to Date Related to the Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Task Force

Rob Dick, Assistant Deputy Fire Chief, reviewed the Actions to Date List.

Mariam Larson, Consultant, shared information about the Friendly Caller Program which is currently being set up and will have volunteers, working from home, conducting wellness calls to seniors who register to be on the list. Ms. Larson also noted:

- Registration will open on Monday and be city based;
- Orientation and scripting for calls is currently being worked on;
- Promotion will occur through the Task Force and the City's various media outlets; and,
- As volunteers will be calling from their personal phones, security measures will be undertaken to block caller ID.

Shelly Schnee, Seniors Program Coordinator, stated that when spring program registrants are called to be advised of program cancellations, they will be provided the opportunity to register for the Friendly Caller Program.

6. Immediate Actions for Consideration Related to the Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Working Group

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, reviewed the Immediate Actions List.

Discussion ensued and Task Force members shared the following concerns:

- Essential service operators are concerned with maintaining a sufficient number of staff during an outbreak;
- There is great difficulty securing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and it would be helpful if the City had access to suppliers and could assist in that way;
- Vulnerable people need to have consistent contact throughout the pandemic in order to ensure that they have enough food and medication;
- Ensuring that seniors feel safe while travelling to do errands as some have been harassed on the street and in stairwells by people loitering;
- Seniors who are self-isolating may want to volunteer in the Friendly Visitor Program as a way to help the community and alleviate boredom;
- Concern was raised regarding how fast services can be mobilized get information out people since one of the main sources of disseminating information is during activities attended at various facilities;
- Flexibility with respect to who is classified as a senior (as it may vary with different services) and what is considered a disability; and,
- Perhaps the armory could be used as a resource and/or base to supply meals, etc.;

In response to questions from the Task Force, staff provide the following comments:

- Members were encouraged to forward contact information for those at risk to Ms. Larson;
- A key contacts list of Task Force members will be sent out to everyone;
- The City continues to work with New Westminster MLA Judy Darcy with the acknowledgement that the constituency office has a limited capacity to assist;
- Informational materials will include translation in a number of languages including a request that people translate for others, and staff are also considering other cultural barriers that may inhibit people from receiving pertinent information;
- The provincial government has created the non-medical phone number of 188 COVID 19 in order to share information regarding the pandemic;
- City bylaw officers will be informed of people loitering near stairwells who intimidate seniors as they travel to get groceries, etc., and which may be addressed through better lighting and other crime prevention environmental design measures;
- The City will be publishing an appeal for donations and volunteers on the city website, and staff will sit with Theresa McManus, a reporter for the New Westminster Record, to share what the task forces are doing to assist the community during this time as well as to highlight needs in the community; and,

- The City does not have a formal budget with respect to the COVID 19 pandemic but is seeking financial assistance from the provincial government, as are other municipalities.

7. Member Updates

Updates were received in the previous section.

8. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

Rob Dick, Assistant Deputy Fire Chief, encouraged Task Force members to contact him or any of the other staff liaisons if they had any questions, concerns, or updates.

Carole Wylie, Century House Association, volunteered to sit as the Alternate Chair for the Seniors and Peoples with Disabilities Task Force.

The meeting adjourned at 2:34 p.m.

Original Signed
Asst. Deputy Fire Chief Rob Dick
Chair

Original Signed
Carilyn Cook
Committee Clerk