



Corporation of the City of
NEW WESTMINSTER

COVID-19: SENIORS & PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TASK FORCE

**May 21, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.
Committee Room 2, City Hall**

Minutes

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

PRESENT (In Person):

Jacklyn Altamura, Chair/Recreation Supervisor, Seniors Services
Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst
Rob Dick, Assistant Deputy Fire Chief
Dylan Myers, Acting Emergency Support Services Deputy Chief
Mike Antoniali, Acting ESS Operations Coordinator
Paolo Zenone, Recreation Leader

PRESENT (via Teleconference):

Staff and Consultants

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning
Christine Edward, Transportation Planner
Alison Ching, Recreation Leader
Jim Luu, Assistant Manager, Queens Park Concessions
Liz Twaites, Volunteer Coordinator
Shelly Schnee, Seniors Program Coordinator
Mariam Larson, Consultant, Mariam Larson Inc.
Carilyn Cook, Committee Clerk

Organizational Representatives

Daisy Au, MOSIAC Seniors
Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Manor
Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC/Lived Experience
Sukhdeep Jassar, Fraser Health Authority
Asifa Lalji, Sustainable Transportation Advisory Committee
Kyoko Takahashi, Seniors Services Society
Ingrid Timmermans, Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice

The meeting convened at 1:00 p.m.

1. Introductions

Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, Seniors Services, introduced herself as the new Chair of the Task Force, after which a roll call of attending Task Force members was taken.

2. Review of Draft Minutes

No comments were received.

3. Update on Actions Taken Since Meeting of May 7, 2020

Friendly Caller Program

Mariam Larson, Consultant, advised that the Friendly Caller Program now has 46 people registered to receive calls, with 169 calls being made to date. She shared that the average age of registrants is 74 years old and that the main reason for the calls is maintaining a connection with others, adding that those who experienced anxiety and depression prior to the start of the pandemic, may see it escalating as the pandemic continues.

Grocery, Meal, and Food Programs

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared food security plan updates including:

- The hamper program that the City is facilitating along with the Greater Vancouver Food Bank and sees 160 hampers being distributed weekly to non-profit organizations, has been extended to June 21st. The Program will be reassessed with the option to continue the service, in the next week;
- The sandwich program operated by the Lookout Housing and Health Society, the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, and St. Vincent de Paul, saw food support funding end as of May 22nd; however, the City will fund the program over the weekend with options to continue the program going to Council for their consideration on Monday;
- The Century House food program run on Tuesdays and Thursday continues to be well attended, with the highest participation seen on Tuesdays;
- City staff are working on a proposal to develop a pilot food security program that would create sustainability by building the capacity of the non-profit and faith-based sector and align with the actions of the City's Food Security Action Plan; and
- Grocery hamper programs are running at St. Barnabas Anglican Church on Fridays and St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church on Saturdays.

Kyoko Takahashi of the Seniors Services Society advised that the Society is supporting 66 clients with grocery shopping, 26 clients are receiving hampers every Wednesday, and 23 clients are receiving support phone calls.

In response to Ms. Takahashi's request for suggestions of medical transportation to appointments for their patrons as offices start opening up, Task Force members provided the following suggestions:

- The St. John Ambulance Community Transfer Program is starting up; however, as there may be a charge for the service, Ms. Takahashi will contact them to see if they will offer a subsidy during the pandemic; and,
- Key West Ford offers a complimentary driver service to get people to appointments, including those appointments located outside of New Westminster. Asifa Lalji of the Sustainable Transportation Committee, agreed to contact Key West Ford to find out if the vehicles used for this purpose are accessible.

With respect to the Wednesday hamper deliveries, Ms. Takahashi confirmed that those registered to receive a hamper will get a confirmation call beforehand so they will know when to expect the delivery.

Task Force Web Portal

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst reminded members that, as the Task Force and Community Resources web portals are continuously updated, they should visit them frequently in order to have the most up-to-date information.

Financial Programs

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, reminded members that the financial programs resource list is also updated frequently and for members to visit it often. He also announced that the Living Hope Christian Church will be hosting two virtual tax clinics on May 23rd and May 30th. As well, the Progressive Housing Society will be hosting a number of tax clinics during the last two weeks of May. Additional information will be included in the post meeting email.

4. COVID-19 and Mental Health

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared the following information:

- Both the Provincial and Federal Governments have extended their mental health resources;
- The Provincial Government has expanded the 211 program, including taking calls from those who would like to volunteer to help seniors;

- Century House continues to offer the Good Cheer Facebook group as well as virtual coffee breaks; and,
- New Westminster Child and Youth Mental Health Services continues to provide intake and services during this time of social distancing. Contact information will be included in the post meeting email.

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, advised that staff will contact Alison Luke of New Westminster Child and Youth Mental Health Services to determine how those without tech devices or the internet can access their services.

Mr. Stark reminded Task Force members of the Digital Inclusion Initiative that the City is working on with the Lower Mainland Purpose Society and Douglas College wherein donated, pre-programmed phones, tablets, and laptops are provided to those in the at-risk community to allow them access to online services as well as helping them maintain contact with others. Mr. Stark agreed to include Shelly Schnee, Seniors Program Coordinator, in future meetings regarding the Initiative which may also be able to assist seniors without tech devices.

5. Hey Neighbour Collective Initiative

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, recapped the Hey Neighbour Initiative information that was shared at the last meeting including that the Initiative, which will be introduced as a pilot program at the Royal City Legion Manor, addresses social connectedness in multi-residential buildings in order to improve and facilitate neighbour relations. He stated that fostering trust amongst neighbours is especially vital in times like this, adding that the Initiative may also assist with emergency management, resilience, and how to be better prepared in emergency situations.

Assistant Deputy Fire Chief Rob Dick advised that residential buildings are required to have a Fire Safety Plan with a Director and Floor Wardens who oversee the Plan, which ties into the Initiative. He noted that each building is viewed as a city, with each floor being a neighbourhood and floor Wardens knowing their neighbourhood and keeping in touch with residents on their floor.

6. Identification of Other Issues, Suggestions to Assist Seniors and Persons with Disabilities, and Member Updates

Assistant Deputy Fire Chief Rob Dick announced the creation of the Extreme Heat Response Plan which looks at cooling centres, notification, etc. The Plan will be distributed to Task Force members for review and will also include information from Environment Canada, which can be fanned out to members' networks.

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, added that the Extreme Heat Response Plan will need to be viewed through the pandemic lens to guide congregation in cooling centres with respect to virus screening so as not to put people at risk.

As cooling centres, malls, etc., are only open during the day, Mr. Stark spoke of a program wherein small, window insert air conditioning units are secured to be provided to seniors who may need them. He noted that while the units may only cool off one room, it would provide much needed respite from the heat for seniors that cannot leave their homes. As well, the Friendly Caller Program could also provide communication with seniors to ensure they are not suffering from heat exhaustion, etc.

Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, Seniors Services, announced that Century House staff are working on celebrating Seniors' Week, from June 1st to 8th, with virtual events, including webinars with Isobel Mackenzie, Seniors' Advocate, on assisted living and seniors and living through COVID-19, and Dr. Davidicus Wong on resiliency, mental health, and managing the current situation. Ms. Altamura also advised that Councillor Chinu Das will be a guest at the virtual coffee break with Shelly Schnee that week as well. The group was urged to share this information with their networks.

Sharon Ennis of the Royal City Legion Manor advised that they have received the bulletin boards for their lobby and laundry room and that various COVID-19 related information, such as the Food Calendar, has been posted on them. She noted that they are being well received and are a great way to share information with residents.

7. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

Next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 4, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 1:44 p.m.

Original Signed
Jacklyn Altamura
Chair

Original Signed
Carilyn Cook
Committee Clerk