



Corporation of the City of  
**NEW WESTMINSTER**

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

**May 7, 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):**

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

#### **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  
Nazanin Esmaeili, Planning Assistant  
Liz Twaites, Volunteer Coordinator  
Shelly Schnee, Seniors Program Coordinator  
Mariam Larson, Consultant, Mariam Larson Inc.

##### ***Organizational Representatives***

Carole Wylie, Century House Association  
Kay Johnson, New West Hospice Society  
Daisy Au, MOSIAC Seniors  
Sharon Ennis, Royal City Legion Manor  
Vivian Garcia, Spinal Cord Injury BC/Lived Experience  
Sukhdeep Jassar, Fraser Health Authority  
Janice Barr, Community Living Society  
Jules Wilson, Ministry of Children and Family Development  
Kyoko Takahashi, Seniors Services Society

The meeting convened at 1:00 p.m.

Responding to a member's enquiry regarding helping those without technology, John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, advised of the Digital Inclusion Initiative being facilitated by the City, the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, and Douglas College of which the goal is to provide donated, pre-programmed phones, tablets, and laptops to seniors and persons at-risk. He noted that staff are working with the IT Department, TELUS, and Shaw to provide Wi-Fi hot spots and free internet access for those who need it. Mr. Stark agreed to ask about including those with developmental disabilities, noting that the impetus for the Initiative is the increased difficulty people are experiencing accessing and applying for supports, which are now mostly online, due to the closure of businesses and libraries.

## **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 9, 2020**

### *Friendly Caller Program*

Mariam Larson, Consultant, and Liz Twaites, Volunteer Coordinator, provided the following updates on the Friendly Caller Program:

- The Program has 44 people registered to receive calls of which 121 have been made to date with the average length being 15 minutes;
- Sensitive calls are being taken care of through peer counselling;
- Most registrants will not need calls once the pandemic is over, however, staff will look at continuing the Program, if needed; and,
- The 15 volunteer callers are managing well and staff continue to keep their mental health in mind so they are not overburdened.

### *Grocery, Meal, and Food Programs*

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, shared food security plan updates including:

- St. Barnabas Anglican Church received a \$50k grant from the Vancouver Foundation for their Grab and Go Food Program;

- Staff continue to await an update on the status of the Vancouver Foundation grant application submitted on behalf of St. Adin' s Church to support their Saturday grocery program;
- Staff are working with the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society on the recovery stage of COVID-19, seeking continued support of food security programs as we move out of the pandemic;
- The Wednesday hamper program run by the City and the Greater Vancouver Food Bank had 150 hampers delivered to various clients this week; and,
- The Tuesday and Thursday supper program at Century House is averaging 20 -25 people each day with 35 – 50 meals served on each of those days.

### *Task Force Web Portal*

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, reminded members that the task force web portal, the Food Calendar, and the Survival Guide continue to be updated as new information arises.

Karen Campbell, Policy Planner, shared that a tenant information document will be complete and shared later this week.

### *Financial Programs*

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, reminded members that the list of financial supports and other resource information on the City's website is also updated frequently.

Mr. Mehdic advised that after the meeting he will share a link for income tax assistance programs, including the Century House Community Volunteer Tax Preparation Program. Task Force members were reminded to contact Lisa Patterson, Community Development Worker, Ministry of Children and Family Development, at 604-660-9495 if they know of someone who can assist with this service.

### *Other Programs*

Assistant Deputy Rob Dick advised members that the City's recent request for comfort kits through the Resource Request Form was denied by the Provincial Government. As a result, staff contacted BC Housing and were informed that they can assist with resources as they have a stockpile of supplies. Members were encouraged to apply through the BC Housing website for needed supplies.

A Task Force member shared that their organization has requested supplies from BC Housing but not received anything, adding that they would follow up with BC Housing.

#### **4. COVID-19 and Mental Health**

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

- The Provincial Government has expanded existing mental health programs along with launching new services;
- Fraser Health is providing emergency assistance for mental health and substance use via their crisis line;
- New Westminster Child and Youth Mental Health Services continue to provide intake and treatment services; and,
- The Rick Hansen Foundation has created a series of COVID-19 resources for persons with disabilities which can be located on their website.

Discussion ensued and members provided the following comments:

- Concern has been raised over the loss of support groups at the Queens Park Care Centre, however, they will be returning;
- Century House has a Good Cheer Facebook page designed to lighten spirits; however, as it is a closed group, seniors who are not Century House members should contact Tim Hicks who will admit them into the group;
- Century House is also hosting virtual coffee breaks two times a week; and,
- Spinal Cord Injury BC is almost completely virtual right now and still supporting patients, caregivers, etc.

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

- Jules Wilson, Ministry of Children and Family Development, advised members of a program for residents at a retirement home in Burnaby wherein the residents receive messages from community members. He will share more information after the meeting;
- Mr. Wilson shared that while the Ministry of Education is encouraging getting youth with disabilities back in school, several parents have voiced concerns over loitering and smoking near the entrance to the high school, possibly by some of the at-risk population that the City is helping;
- Sharon Ennis, of the Royal City Legion Manor, thanked Asifa Lalji of the Sustainable Transportation Advisory Committee for connecting her with sponsors

who provided a bulletin board and two hand sanitizer stations for the Manor's lobby. She also thanked Task Force members for their support;

- Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, advised that Sleep Country Canada has committed to donating \$1.5M worth of mattresses, bedframes, and pillows to communities in need. Further information to be provided in the meeting's follow up email;
- John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, shared that the various COVID-19 related task forces may run until October at which point they would be reevaluated and monitored for a second wave, noting that post pandemic recovery for nonprofit organizations will be challenging as fundraising will be down significantly. Additionally, the Task Force will commence with bi-weekly meetings in order for them to be more efficiently programed;
- Mr. Stark advised of a new standing agenda item that the Task Force will address at upcoming meetings called the Hey Neighbour Collective Initiative which will be introduced at the Royal City Legion Manor. The Initiative will address social connectedness in multi-residential buildings in order to improve and facilitate neighbour relations and, as this will be a pilot program for the City, learnings may be applied to other buildings in the future; and,
- Mr. Stark stated that communications and messaging with respect to being kind to one another during this challenging time, including those groups who may be targeted, will be addressed at future meetings.

Heidi Clarkson of IMPACT Parkinson's provided the following updates via email:

- They are now offering virtual sessions of Rock Steady Boxing, Yoga, and Group Voice Therapy for current and new clients. Members were urged to refer anyone they know with Parkinson's who would benefit from these programs, to the organization;
- Fundraising has been moved to online in the form of a virtual raffle; and,
- A COVID-19 Wellness Toolkit is now available for youth and can be located at <https://stigmafreetoolkit.com/>

## 6. Next Steps and Meeting Schedule

Next meeting will be held on Thursday, May 21, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Original Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
**Asst. Deputy Fire Chief Rob Dick**  
**Chair**

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