

**SENIORS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
(SAC)**

**March 11, 2021**

**Meeting held electronically under Ministerial Order No. M192/2020 and  
the current Order of the Provincial Health Officer - *Gatherings and Events***

**MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Councillor Chinu Das	- Chair
Frances Blake	- Century House Association Representative
Calvin Donnelly	- Sapperton Old Age Pensioners' Association Representative
Tim Hicks	- Community Member
Donna MacLean	- Queensborough 50+ Social Club Representative
Lynn Radbourne	- Community Member
Julia Schoennagel	- Alternate Chair/Community Member
Brenda Southam	- BC Seniors Services Society Representative

**MEMBER REGRETS:**

Rosemary Dunne	- Community Member
Harbir Batra	- Community Member
Val MacDonald	- Community Member

**STAFF PRESENT:**

John Stark	- Supervisor, Community Planning
Jay Young	- Manager, Recreation Facilities
Jacklyn Altamura	- Recreation Supervisor, Seniors Services
Anur Mehdić	- Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst
Shelly Schnee	- Program Coordinator, Seniors
Brooke Holtz	- FOI and Privacy Coordinator
Carilyn Cook	- Committee Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m.

**1.0 ADDITIONS / DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA**

**1.1 MOVED and SECONDED**

*THAT the March 11, 2021 Seniors Advisory Committee meeting agenda be adopted with the Seniors Housing Lab & Seniors Housing Forum replacing the Digital Inclusion Initiative as New Business Item 4.3 as per John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning.*

**CARRIED.**

All members of the Committee present voted in favour of the motion.

## **2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

### **2.1 Adoption of March 5, 2020 Minutes**

#### **MOVED and SECONDED**

*THAT the Minutes of the March 5, 2020 Seniors Advisory Committee meeting be adopted as circulated.*

**CARRIED.**

All members of the Committee present voted in favour of the motion.

## **3.0 PRESENTATIONS**

There were no items.

## **4.0 NEW BUSINESS**

### **4.1 Election of Alternate Chair**

#### **MOVED AND SECONDED**

*THAT Julia Schoennagel be elected as the Alternate Chair for the 2021 term of the Seniors Advisory Committee.*

**CARRIED.**

All members of the Committee present voted in favour of the motion.

### **4.2 COVID-19 Update**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, shared that shortly after the COVID-19 public health emergency was called on March 17, 2021, the City established seven task forces including the COVID-19 At-Risk & Vulnerable Populations Task Force (for those who are homeless, precariously housed, or experiencing food insecurity, etc.) and the COVID-19 Seniors & Persons Living with Disabilities Task Force. He noted that the communities focused upon in these specific task forces are disproportionately impacted when emergencies occur, especially those of which there is no precedent like the pandemic we are now experiencing.

Mr. Stark and Jacklyn Altamura, Recreation Supervisor, Seniors Services, provided brief outlines of what the two task forces have worked on during the pandemic:

- COVID-19 At-Risk & Vulnerable Populations Task Force initiatives over the past year include:

- Creation of a web portal that provides regularly updated COVID-19 information regarding financial assistance, food security, government benefits, tenant information, and other trusted links;
  - Establishment of five food security and resource hubs in partnership with the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society;
  - Received a Reaching Home grant in the amount of \$101,000 which assisted in funding the five food security and resource hubs as well as facilitating the purchase of shopping buggies to help people get their food home;
  - Partnered with MOSAIC for their Newcomers Feeding the Homeless Project which provides newcomers with Food Safe training, etc.;
  - City provided \$100,000 in funding to the New Westminster Rent Bank for loans, etc., which many seniors have utilized;
  - Drop off and do-it-yourself laundry services for those who are homeless, precariously housed, or with no access to laundry;
  - Shower program with the Parks and Recreation Department at the Canada Games Pool;
  - Provision of portable washrooms throughout the community. The City is now considering purchasing free-standing washrooms that are safe, secure, and clean;
  - Partnered with Douglas College and the Lower Mainland Purpose Society on the Digital Inclusion Initiative creating Wi-Fi hotspots throughout the city and technology access and training to keep people connected with family, friends, and services;
  - Continued work with BC Housing to provide 40 beds at an Emergency Response Centre and supportive housing; and,
  - A Health Contact Centre for harm prevention, supervised consumption, drug testing, and access to other health care resources.
- Ms. Altamura shared that COVID-19 Seniors & Persons with Disabilities Task Force initiatives over the past year include:
    - Ongoing outreach via the Friendly Support Caller Program which places seniors with volunteers for wellness checks;
    - The Tuesday and Thursday meal service at Century house; and,
    - Partnered with Save On Foods to assist seniors who cannot get out to purchase groceries, including the provision of vouchers and food delivery.

It was noted that there is an overlap between the two Task Forces who provide feedback on concerns and issues that affect both groups.

In response to questions from the Committee, staff provided the following comments:

- Those participating in the Shower Initiative receive a courtesy bag upon arrival at the Canada Games Pool which consists of a towel, soap, toothbrush, granola bar, \$10 A&W voucher, etc.;
- A map outlining city-based Wi-Fi hotspots will soon be made public, and the City will look into inexpensive and efficient Wi-Fi antennas and continue work with Shaw on free Internet services; and,
- The Health Contact Centre (overdose prevention site) will not provide pharmaceutical alternatives on-site, and the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, who will be managing the Centre, will provide a range of wrap around services.

Councillor Das shared that the City had to pivot at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and that she is proud of how staff rose to the challenge and of all the work that is being done.

### **4.3 Seniors Housing Lab & Seniors Housing Forum**

Anur Mehdic, Housing and Child Care Planning Analyst, shared a presentation regarding housing for older adults and seniors and addressing issues such as thriving and aging in place. He advised that the current rental market in the Metro Vancouver region is threatening the housing security of many lower income tenants, including seniors, with many at risk of losing their housing due to escalating rents, low vacancy rates, and living on a fixed income.

He noted that 50 cross-section stakeholders and senior advisors, including the Seniors Services Society, Simon Fraser University, the United Way of the Lower Mainland, etc., participated in the Senior Housing Lab in a series of workshops to address housing concerns that affect seniors, and concluding with the Seniors Housing Forum which took place on November 9, 2020, where ideas were presented to decision-makers such as MLAs and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Mr. Mehdic stated that the essential challenge statement addressed during the Lab and Forum was, “How might we enable low-income senior tenants in multi-unit buildings to retain their housing, age in the right place, and thrive?” He asked Committee members for their feedback on the question and received the following responses:

- Facilitate aging in place through accessibility (many multi-unit buildings that seniors reside in do not have elevators);
- Address rental increases that occur with building upgrades and otherwise;
- Address the increase in the cost of utilities; and,
- Ensure that older buildings where seniors reside are maintained properly.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Mehdic advised that the goal is to be proactive in addressing the challenges encountered by our growing seniors population by creating a continuum of housing and supports from all levels of government.

Discussion ensued, and the Committee provided the following comments:

- The BC Seniors Advocate should be preserved to ensure that there are adequate and up-to-date facts and data to keep things moving forward; and,
- The mixed landscape of social health, financial support, etc., must be considered, including that seniors living in urban areas may have different needs than those residing in more rural areas.

#### **4.4 Seniors Issues to Explore During 2021**

Councillor Das queried which topics the Committee should address during the 2021 term, and members provided the following suggestions;

- Ageism;
- Consideration of employing those who are now jobless due to the pandemic, such as roadies, to assist at pop up vaccination clinics;
- The Agnes Street Greenway which has removed bus access for some seniors; and,
- Seniors experiencing isolation and how technology can help keep people connected.

In response to questions from the Committee, John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, provided the following comments:

- Vaccination rollouts and providing transportation for vulnerable seniors to and from vaccination sites has been discussed at the COVID-19 Task Forces meetings and brought to the attention of Fraser Health. As well, anticipated funding from the Strengthening Communities' Services Program grant may allow for provision of vouchers for taxis, etc.;
- Fraser Health is facing a capacity issue including the need for larger sites to facilitate vaccination rollouts and, as pop up vaccination clinics will be more for the unsheltered population, pharmacies, which already provide flu shots, may be a good way to provide vaccines as most seniors already have a specific pharmacy that they frequent; and,
- The City's Great Streets Initiative prioritizes pedestrians including providing wider sidewalks and more seating through parklets, and cafes; however, Mr. Stark will contact Lisa LeBlanc, Manager, Transportation, regarding benches in and around the Quay as well as in Queensborough.

## **5.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **5.1 Hey Neighbour Collective**

John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, shared a presentation outlining the Hey Neighbour Collective, an initiative to facilitate social interaction, connectedness, and resilience in multi-unit residential buildings. Mr. Stark noted that the initiative could be particularly beneficial to seniors and that the Ross Tower in New Westminster may be an ideal building for implementation of the initiative as it is managed by BC Housing and includes over 100 units of subsidized housing, serving a very vulnerable population.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Stark advised that the Ross Tower was built in the 1960s making it similar in age to the Emerald Terrace in Vancouver, and that a partnership with a non-profit organization to facilitate the program at the building is being investigated as a way to avoid adding additional responsibilities to the resident manager's role. Mr. Stark noted that previously the Parks and Recreation Department successfully assisted in engagement at Pioneer House and the Elizabeth Fry Society, and this could provide valuable learnings for engaging seniors.

## **6.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION**

### **6.1 Century House Association Report**

Frances Blake, Century House Association Representative, shared that even though many activities are not taking place due to the pandemic, the Association has been busy with such initiatives as Seniors Embracing Technology (SET) which has been a great resource for technology courses for seniors, and of which Tim Hicks is the Chair. Additional updates provided by Ms. Blake, included:

- The Association's first chairperson meeting of the year was very well attended;
- Century House has done a great job keeping the community engaged throughout the pandemic; and,
- The Friendly Support Caller Program has been rewarding for both volunteers and clients.

### **6.2 Sapperton Old Age Pensioners Association Report**

No report was received.

### 6.3 Queensborough 50+ Social Club

Donna MacLean, Queensborough 50+ Social Club Representative, shared that due to COVID-19 the Club has not been holding any activities and that currently, as people stay within their bubbles, no meetings are scheduled for the near future.

Ms. MacLean expressed gratitude to Lisa Leblanc, Manager, Transportation, for following up on the request for disabled parking in Queensborough with the addition of disabled parking spots by the Q to Q Ferry and at the community garden.

Ms. MacLean advised that it is vital that public transportation keeps up with the rapid growth in population in Queensborough, including addressing the community's limited bus access and the implementation of a bus to service all of Queensborough, including Port Royal, the community centre, and possibly even Hamilton Community Centre in Richmond, which many residents patronize.

As noted under agenda Section 4.4: Seniors Issues to Explore During 2021, John Stark, Supervisor, Community Planning, will invite Ms. Leblanc to attend the next Committee meeting to discuss the challenges and issues associate with public transit in Queensborough.

### 7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items.

### 8.0 NEXT MEETING

Thursday, May 13, 2021

### 9.0 ADJOURNMENT

**ON MOTION**, the meeting was adjourned at 4:49 p.m.

Certified correct,

Original Signed  
**Councillor Das**  
**Chair**

Original Signed  
**Carilyn Cook**  
**Committee Clerk**