Thursday, April 20, 2023 7:30 – 9:10 AM

Members present: Alexis Babaian, Leslie Clapp, Louise Clough, Betsy Edge, Beth Folcarelli, Sarah Kuh, Lewis Laskaris, Bob Laskowski, Marina Lent, Karen McPhail, Paddy Moore, Lisa Nagy, Chantale Patterson, Dan Pesch, Susan Pratt, Kathleen Samways, Joyce Stiles Tucker, Sheryl Taylor Thompson, Martina Thornton, Christine Todd, Cindy Trish, Mary Jane Williams, Jim Woolf. Guests present: Cathy Wozniak, Sue Diverio, Doug Ruskin

**Call meeting to order / Approval of March 16 meeting minutes:** Mary Jane Williams called the meeting to order at 7:30 AM. The March minutes were moved, seconded, and approved.

**Updates/Comments on topics identified as needing continued focus in 2021**

* **Housing** – Doug Ruskin talked about the importance of the Housing Bank legislation and said that although there is some support for it, it will not happen quickly. If letters/calls to legislators are needed, we will be notified. Our legislative representatives, Representative Dylan Fernandes and Senator Julian Cyr, are strongly in favor of it but have stated that, to date, the Vineyard hasn’t done enough with the resources available to them. They would like to see zoning changes as well as short-term rental taxes be more dedicated to housing than they have been here. Over the last few years Nantucket has dedicated about $62,000,000 to attainable housing. Politicians and others on the Island need to understand that there is no bigger issue than housing. Bob Laskowski asked about actions we should take, and Doug said to talk it up with everyone, and if we notice articles about the situation send them to the Select Boards and Planning Boards. Write to Select Boards and send letters to the editors, show up at Select Board and Planning Board meetings when there is anything related on those agendas. Paddy Moore described a family that was suddenly homeless when the house they were living in turned into a short-term rental property. Dan said that to deal with these situations, regulations need to be in place to control the short-term rental market. For example, not allowing non-residents and corporations to own property just for short-term rentals. Laura Silber at the MV Commission has examples of wording for regulations like these. The Commission is developing a Housing taskforce similar to the Climate Change taskforce. Doug recommended that we invite Laura to a future meeting for more information on this topic.
* **SUD & Behavioral Health** – Beth Folcarelli, Martha’s Vineyard Community Services, began by listing the top five critical needs identified as:

1. Behavioral Health Workforce -Recruitment. Retention, Competence, Commitment (to Island service). Community Services has a new 2-year State grant through EOHHS. Initiatives include professional development, clinical staff and housing (clinical residency), and a Substance Abuse Clinic Workforce Pipeline Initiative.
2. Emergency Response – Diversion from Justice System and Emergency Department – a partnership has been developed between Community Services and the police departments. They are working on submitting a proposal to the Department of Mental Health to fund one FTE in behavioral health emergency response, with a goal of keeping people out of the justice system and out of the emergency department.
3. Care Management for Islanders with complex mental health, substance use, and medical condition. A contract has been entered into with Stanley Street Treatment and Resources (STTAR) to serve as MV’s Behavioral Health Community Partner. Mass Health beneficiaries who enroll will be supported by a MV Community Services Clinician/Nurse + a Care Coordinator, beginning May first.
4. Child & Family Behavioral Health has been re-opened with an Advanced Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner with child & adolescent specialization in place. There is also a licensed social worker, but Beth is still looking for a manager for the program.
5. Comprehensive Community Behavioral Health Center – they are in the final stages of contracting with EOHHS to be designated a Community Behavioral Health Center (CMHC) offering mental health and substance abuse services. The program will be ramped up based on workforce availability. Mobile crisis intervention will eventually be added if contracting with the State is successful. Marina Lent asked about Brazilian community providers and Beth said that although the involved are not from that community, Community Services has a community access team who are available as interpreters in clients’ homes through Zoom. Sarah Kuh asked what was different with the CBHC from what was being done now. Beth answered that very specific requirements on evidence-based practice were required and the mobile crisis interventions will take place in the community rather than in the emergency room. Other requirements include additional registered nurses and very prescriptive timeframes for access.

Susan Pratt asked whether the SUD coordinator was in place and whether the collaboration with polices departments was modeled on similar programs. Beth said that Bill Rovero is the new SUD coordinator, funded by the Towns – based on warrant articles this year – and the SUD Coalition will be responsible for funding for FY 2025. Bill will also be updating and overseeing First Stop, which has been dormant for a few years. Regarding the co-response with police departments, Beth said that consulted with Framingham, which has been doing this for years. The typical model is to embed one clinician in one police department, but DMH is allowing a different model since we have 6 police departments to serve. The model will be a triage system with police calling Community Services when there is a need, and a small team of trained people will respond to the need.

* **Access** – Sarah Kuh, Vineyard Health Care Access & Betsy Edge, Health Imperatives

Sarah described Vineyard Health Care Access as a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic service which connects Islanders with public health insurance. It’s a program of the County, founded by the DCHC in 1999. Employees are Certified Navigators for the Massachusetts Health Connector. In 2022 they assisted over 4,000 people to get Mass Health. They also have SHINE counselors who help people over 65 with Medicare applications.

As of April first, the Federal Medicaid continuous coverage - put into place during COVID – began to end. As Mass Health begins renewing all the policies, coverage will change for people who were covered under the Public Health Emergency but wouldn’t otherwise qualify for Mass Health. Vineyard Healthcare Access has added hours to work with people on Mass Health applications and added some hours for SHINE counselors in light of the increasing ageing population on the Vineyard. Immigrant Islanders with limited English proficiency will be eligible for Massachusetts health insurance which will be much better that in most States, but still limited because of their immigration status. Assisting them with access to needed services is a big part of the work as well as assisting them on getting transportation since many services are not available on the Island. They provide emergency assistance for prescription medication. In wrapping up Sarah noted that they don’t work in isolation – they are effective because they can connect with all the other agencies in DCHC and beyond.

Betsy said she has someone coming to the Island who is a harm reduction worker able to enroll people in Mass Health. She’s currently enrolling patients with PREP, Hep C patients, patients who might need ultrasounds, gender affirming therapy patients. A large portion of their patients are either uninsured or have Mass Health, so they are talking to all of them, making sure all their demographics are up to date with Mass Health so that they don’t miss the letter to re-enroll.

* **Oral Health –** KathleenSamways, Island Health Care

Kathleen started out by saying that the new dental clinic was just one goal of the Council’s Oral Health Group. Some background: Vineyard Smiles has long been addressing the need for dental services with pop-up clinics in the schools and senior centers; in 2018 the Oral Health Group considered a Rural Scholars study of dental services on the Island; in 2020 the hospital closed the safety net dental clinic; people no need to go off-Island for preventive care, and urgent care interventions – many for pain – are now going to the emergency room. The Oral Health Group began to meet to address the concern and Island Health Care was identified as a potential location for a pop-up preventive care location. It was determined that Island Health Care, a Federally Qualified Health Center, was the ideal home for a safety net dental clinic. FQHC dental clinics serve unserved and underserved populations and can also serve those with dental insurance or fee-for-service. Island Health offers a sliding-fee schedule for people to access oral health care.

With the help of Council Member and Island Health Care Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jim Wolff, The BU Goldman School of Dental Medicine agreed to partner in the building and development of a state-of-the-art dental clinic at IHC. Accomplishments to date include: raising most of the capital funds required; purchasing property at Mariner’s Way to locate the clinic; a clinical architecture drawings and are working on the bidding process; partnered with the high school, MVCET and Cape Cod Community College on workforce development for Dental Assistant hiring and training; secured workforce development funding for the Dental Assistant initiative; and are talking to a potential dental director.

Kathleen showed a sketch of the design and a picture of a typical treatment area. Services will include pediatric and geriatric special services and the clinic has a projected opening date of January 2024.

* **Aging –** Cindy Trish, Healthy Aging Martha’s Vineyard said one of the most important statistics that we have to keep in mind is that one in three of our population is over the age of 65, and it is projected that by 2030 25% of our older adults will be over 85. This older population will have increasing needs for services. Critical concerns include housing. Nine out of ten older adults live in single family dwellings and the question is how long they can stay in those homes. Healthy Aging has a Home Safety program and is establishing a Home Sharing program. Two hospital employees have been placed in Home Sharing and it’s a win-win for both the workers and the older hosts.

The next critical area is around transportation – providing essential transportation for example to medical appointments as well as enrichment. There is a coalition with 15 members and there are 5 pilot programs in place, including one for medical transport off-Island. Funding has been secured to provide an Island-wide transportation coordinator for older adults.

In-home services – many older adults are having trouble accessing in-home services. While there are many providers, waiting lists are long.

Cindy also commented on State-level support. Former Governor Charlie Baker was a strong supporter and made a lot of things happen about healthy aging at the State level. It’s not really clear what’s going to happen going forward, so we need make sure that we continue to receive support for the funding for different programs for older adults.

Finally, Cindy reminded the Council that Healthy Aging MV was the brain child of the Council 10 years ago. Kathleen Samways thanked Paddy Moore who started Healthy Aging and also Cindy for all her hard work.

* **Data –** Alexis Babaian, Health Council Data & Information committee – deferred to a future meeting because of time limitations.

**Other Member Updates**

Susan Pratt said that she was thinking about another population that we haven’t talked about. The homeless shelter closed on April first. She was helping with the showers and laundry and that has ended also. So those who used the shelter don’t have showers or laundry - or a home.

Paddy Moore said that yesterday morning the Department of Public Health Determination of Need Program gave approval for the new Navigator Homes nursing home. This was the last major regulatory hurdle, but there is still much work to be done, including fundraising, and helping people – including the neighbors – to understand the importance of the workforce housing the hospital is building as part of this project.

Kathleen Samways said that today’s meeting was to update and discuss the Council priorities that were set out in 2021, and a survey to Council members will be going out soon to get input on what our priorities show be over the next two years.

**Public Health Updates** – Marina Lent, Town of Aquinnah Health Agent. Before Marina started, Paddy suggested that she be put first on the agenda at the next meeting, since public health is so important, and Marina shouldn’t be rushed to talk at the end of a meeting. Marina then said that public health is not just the health agents and departments, but everything the Council is doing. She will give a roundup at the next meeting and encourage people to get in touch with her if they need more detail on anything discussed.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:10 am**

**The next regular Health Council meeting will be held via zoom on May 18 at 7:30 am**

Respectfully submitted, Louise Clough, secretary