Thursday, January 19, 2023 7:30 – 9:00 AM

Members present: Alexis Babaian, Victor Capoccia, Leslie Clapp, Louise Clough, Cindy Doyle, Betsy Edge, Beth Folcarelli, Lewis Laskaris, Bob Laskowski, Marina Lent, Karen MacPhail, Lisa Nagy, Chantale Patterson, Dan Pesch, Susan Pratt, Kathleen Samways, Susan Sanford, Joyce Stiles Tucker, Sheryl Taylor Thompson, Christine Todd, Mary Jane Williams. Guests present: Emily Gold, Julia Kehoe, Terre Young, Leah Palmer, Patrick Roden-Reynolds.

**Call meeting to order / Approval of December 21 meeting minutes:** Mary Jane Williams called the meeting to order at 7:30 AM. The December minutes were moved, seconded, and approved.

**Health Imperatives Update –** Julia Kehoe, CEO of Health Imperatives, and Emily Gold, the director of medical services at Health Imperatives, gave an overview of Health Imperatives, which provides health care and human services in seven locations on the South Shore, South Coast, Cape, and Islands. There are four general areas of service: sexual & reproductive health; Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition assistance; medical & psychiatric care for youth who in the custody of the Department of Youth Services; support for survivors of violence. Programs specific to the Vineyard include sexual & reproductive services, Cape Cod and the Islands Healthy Families, and the Cape Cod WIC program – important because eligibility does not depend on immigration status. The approach to services includes client centered, trauma informed, health navigation, and no one is denied care due to inability to pay. Over have the people served on the Vineyard are uninsured. New services include Narcan education & distribution, medication for alcohol & opioid disorders, latent tuberculosis screening, and - starting July 1 – medication abortion services. Health Imperatives funding is through the state and federal government. Priorities are low-income individual & families. un/under-insured, adolescents, immigrants/non-U.S. born, LGBTQIA+ individuals, people with substance use disorders, people with trauma histories, including sexual assault, human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual exploitation, and incarcerated adults.

Christine Todd asked if the Vineyard was unique in having 50% of patients uninsured and Julia said that the other locations had 45% - 50% uninsured and the Vineyard is a little higher, but growing faster than the other locations. Marina Lent asked how many people were not served by anybody other than Health Imperatives. Julia thought that most of the people who don’t have insurance are not seen by other providers. Emily clarified that in part because there are access issues to primary care on the island, people come to Health Imperatives for all their healthcare needs that can be provided. Bob Laskowski asked about the housing situation here – any impact on employees or patients? Julia acknowledged that the lack or safe affordable housing has a major problem on being able to stay healthy. Terre young said she would refer Emily and Julia to Vineyard House and Harbor Homes. Christine asked about mental health services, and Julia said they provide counseling, but for immediate needs they refer people to exiting services in the community. They are also looking to provide additional counseling services, especially for young people in the areas of medication abortion and gender reassignment. Dan Pesch said he just wanted to compliment the Vineyard team – the hospital sees many of their patients and they always want to go back to Health Imperatives– it’s a safe, comfortable place for them to get care, especially for the adolescents. Louise Clough asked about the medication abortions – will the medications be available to the clinic, and will they be covered by insurance? Emily said that both medications will be available, and there will be no need to go to a pharmacy. Mass Health Limited is an insurance product for people who don’t have immigration status. It will cover abortion services. Kathleen Samways wanted to announce the partnership between Island Health and Health Imperatives to continue the vaccine clinics. There will be clinics on alternating Saturday afternoons and Fridays, starting January 21 and going through the end of May. (*Note that the Health Imperatives presentation will be sent to Council members and is considered part of the meeting minutes.*)

**Public Health Updates** – Marina Lent said it looks like it will be an early flu season, but perhaps not building as time passes. COVID cases are high, but seem to have stabilized, but she is not comfortable with the chronic problems with the disease. Long COVID as a chronic illness is similar to chronic Lyme disease, which we a familiar with here. Lisa Nagy wanted to comment and chronic COVID and chronic Lyme disease including that people sometimes don’t get over Lyme disease and COVID when they have immune damage from exposure to bad housing and bad air quality. Marina told Lisa she would love to go off-line with her to talk about how to educate the public about long COVID, and they will do that. Louise said that the rest of the public health updates would continue after out next scheduled presentation with Sheryl and Leah.

**Community Ambassador Partnership -** Sheryl Taylor Thompson and Leah Palmer. Sheryl said that though most of us know her through her work at the schools, she and Leah are co-cofounders of the Communication Ambassador Partnership, which started in April 2020 when everything closed down in order to communicate health information and information from the schools to bilingual populations on the Island. The goal of today’s presentation is to share some of the data collected, lessons learned, and future efforts to expand language access to everyone. In addition to the many Brazilian Portuguese speakers, there are increasing numbers of Spanish speakers, as well as a few other languages, including sign language. Most of the demographic data is from March 2021 – March 2022, Census data, data gathered at the mobile vaccine clinics and other community events.

Leah introduced herself as the English Language Learning Director for the Martha’s Vineyard Public Schools, overseeing programs from pre-K through adult. When she started in 2011 there were only 70 English Language Learners in the schools, and by 2022 there were 420. These are just the current students, not those who have exited the program, or who speak another language at home but don’t need ELL services at school. Sheryl said that in 2021-2022 they had 73 new students in the ELL program, while in previous years it had been 12 to 15. Leah talked about the discrepancies between to 2020 census and the demographics of the MVPS population. Part of the challenge is the way questions are asked, for example, Hispanic or non-Hispanic. Hispanic includes South America, but then there are questions about Spanish. Interpreting support through a language line increased during COVID, by 69% at Island Health Care and 176% at the hospital. Early on, providers were requesting Portuguese interpretation, not Brazilian Portuguese, so that was a lesson learned. They don’t have much data on written translation, and they realized that written translated documents don’t give families access if they are low literacy in their own language. They started using What’s App during the pandemic offering multilingual videos and oral recordings, including with crucial COVID information. 500 families are using What’s App. Sheryl talked about how they are making things better – asking people what language they speak at home or what language the prefer, and what language are you most comfortable using today. At events they are asking everyone what language the use, not just singling out persons who look like they are Brazilians.

For workforce and sustainability, since June of 2020 they offered a 10-hour Community Interpreting Course and in 2021 offered a 60-hour Medical Interpreting Course. Last spring, they offered the Community Interpreting course to high school juniors and seniors. This spring there will be another Community Interpreting Course at the high school, and a Medical Interpreting course at the hospital.

Leah described the CAP Stepping Stones Mentorship program. Six MVRHS seniors have been paired with six community members for support with college and career planning. There have been workshops supporting undocumented youth and their families with college and career planning.

Christine asked about interfaces between CAP and law enforcement on the island, and she also asked about teaching Brazilian Portuguese to those most in contact with this population. And she asked about the interpreter training – is it open to the public, is there a cost, and how is it being promoted? Leah said that the medical interpreter training is open to the public and they are asking for a $200 donation which will go right back into CAP to be able to provide more services (it would usually cost $900 - $1,000). There are no current courses for English speakers to learn Brazilian Portuguese, but because we are a bi-lingual island, CAP is very open to that idea. There is no formal collaboration with law enforcement but they are open to figuring that out.

**Public Health Updates Continued** – since the meeting was running out of time, Louise asked Kathleen if they could do a more extensive presentation at the February meeting, highlighting the work that Patrick Roden-Reynolds and Alexis Babaian have been doing as part of the Public Health Excellence Program and related work. This would be separate from the regular brief public health updates.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:05 am**

**The next regular Health Council meeting will be held via zoom on February 16, at 7:30 am**

Respectfully submitted, Louise Clough, secretary