Thursday, May 18, 2023 7:30 – 9:00 AM

Members present: Victor Capoccia, Leslie Clapp, Louise Clough, Cindy Doyle, Betsy Edge, Beth Folcarelli, Marcy Holmes, Sarah Kuh, Lewis Laskaris, Bob Laskowski, Marina Lent, Paddy Moore, Lisa Nagy, Chantale Patterson, Dan Pesch, Susan Pratt, Kathleen Samways, Joyce Stiles Tucker, Sheryl Taylor Thompson, Christine Todd, Cindy Trish, Mary Jane Williams, Jim Wolff. Guests present: Cathy Wozniak, Laura Silber.

**Call meeting to order / Approval of April 20 meeting minutes:** Mary Jane Williams called the meeting to order at 7:30 AM. The April minutes were moved, seconded, and approved.

**Rural Scholars 2023 Process**

Dan Pesch reported that because of changes in the UMass curriculum we won’t have medical students for the rural scholars program, but may be getting two nurse practitioners, although that isn’t confirmed yet. Paddy Moore has been in touch with Dan about possible projects and said that another option would be to look at all the past projects and see what the status of recommendation is – Alexis Babaian is already working on this. Dan is waiting for confirmation about dates/schedule and identification of students. There is a possibility that there will be no program this year, but he is confident that next year there will be a full complement of students. He’ll contact Mary Jane and Louise when he gets more information.

Even if we don’t get rural scholar students this year it was agreed that a look at all past projects and meeting with their sponsors to determine updates and outcomes was something the Council should do. Looking at methodologies/how time was spent could also be reviewed. Kathleen Samways wondered if we could survey the past students and see how many ended up in rural health – Dan said that he could get that data.

**Public Health Update**

Marina Lent started with an update on the tick-borne illness program. There will be an educational event in join and an intern is being hired, and the health agents are reorienting some of the case investigation work. Data will be collected from patients, laboratories, and Patrick Rodon-Reynolds – leading to much better information about tick-borne illness here.

Her main topic today is the post-COVID lifting of the public health emergency by the World Health Organization. This doesn’t mean that the pandemic is over – people still need to be concerned. The emergency response is over, but the disease will be with us indefinitely. Vaccine costs will be covered in full but only as long as purchased supplies last. After that, coverage will depend on your insurance as will testing and treatment, something she characterized as an equity issue. We do know that COVID causes organ damage, cardiac, neurological, increases diabetes and long COVID can be a minor irritant to full-on disability for an indeterminate period of time. The virus will predictably throw off new variants. She said if you look closely, COVID evidences deep inequity, both racial and socioeconomic. We can take measures as individuals: stay home when you are sick, get vaccinated, wear an N95 mask in crowded indoor spaces, and in hospitals and medical settings, avoid indoor gatherings, open the windows, and test before getting together.

Lisa Nagy commented about Postural Orthostatic Syndrome being a part of long COVID for many people.

Sarah Kuh suggested that our Island could be a little bubble for a rational proactive system of tracking an managing this now endemic infectious disease. Dan Pesch said that he thought there was a lot of good that happened on the Island – we had over 7,000 people infected with COVID and about 60 people were expected to die of COVID, based on statistical data available. Instead there was only one death.

**Housing Action Taskforce**

Laura Silber, MV Commission Island Housing Planner, reported on the successful Housing Action Taskforce launch which took place on May 11. 75 people were on the call and presenters included Senator Cyr, Provincetown Select Board and Assistant Town Manager. and Nantucket’s Housing Director. Both Provincetown and Nantucket are ahead of the Vineyard regarding forward thinking about housing and Select Boards understand this is a priority. Laura showed the MV Commission’s new Housing section of their website, which includes a lot of useful resources and information. There is also a link to the taskforce’s YouTube channel which has a video of the Taskforce launch meeting and all future meetings will be available there for review.

Laura described the launch as a very dense informational meeting and said they have not yet completely figured out how to structure the taskforce. She referenced the Commission’s Climate Action Taskforce which spent a lot of time building the Climate Action Plan, but said the housing situation is an immediate concern, and staff have already done a lot of work. They are looking for a way to fast-track the process with the taskforce doing a dual job: keeping the towns informed of what each other is doing and homogenizing the conversation across all six towns; and, actively engaging the community and stakeholders in the conversation on an Island-wide level. They will be applying for State funding. The plan is to have meetings every two months and alternate those meetings with the Joint Affordable Housing Group which includes all six towns. She said that Tucker Holland from Nantucket will be on the Island on Friday and two towns have asked to meet with him about municipal workforce housing, which is something Nantucket has started to tackle. Public funding is not usually available for such projects but she said we should partner with Nantucket and seek special designation from the State that would allow public money to the used for municipal workforce housing. The towns will need to figure out how the keep emergency service workers and will need to find ways to give them preference for affordable housing.

A primary goal of this effort is for all town governments to understand that this is a base level public health issue, a functional infrastructure issue. She also described attending the towns’ affordable housing and planning board meetings and not seeing any community members participating. The leads to committee and board meeting members making decisions about what they think should be done without community input. And people are more likely to send letters in opposition of projects, than in support of them, giving Select Boards skewed information. This is something the Council could help with. Laura also said that Christine Todd has asked what the County can do and said she’s talking about this at the Commission and thinks the County does have a role in getting the community engaged. Christine talked about the need for a propaganda campaign: putting consistent public messaging out to public media, letters to the editor, letters to housing committees, Select Boards, and health agents. She suggested that . the communication committees of both the County and the Health Council sit down and develop a collaborative and coordinated strategy to getting the communication out.

Separately, Laura asked if there is an emergency action plan at the County of through the Towns if migrants start arriving on the Island again? Christine said “no” for the County. Laura asked that the County and Health Council take this on. She said tat Nantucket has a well-developed plan and we should too. Christine will bring this up with the County and contact Nantucket. Sarah Kuh said that migrants are arriving everyday who need all kinds of services. They are primarily undocumented, and mostly families. While not the large groups arriving all at once that Laura was concerned about, they are another component of the situation, happening every day. Kathleen Samways mentioned the monthly touch point call where member of all the service delivery organizations get together on a call and that topic could be brought to that group.

**Summary of DCHC Priorities Identified in 2021**

Kathleen Samways gave an overview of the priorities identified in 2021, stating that they had been discussed in the prior Council meetings in much more detail. Keeping in mind what’s already been done, do we want to continue them, do we want to switch out priorities, do we want to take a different tack?

Those priorities were rated as follows:

* we were doing well with healthy aging and would continue with that
* we were moderately effective with SUD, housing and access/data and would continue with those
* we were somewhat effective with dental and would continue with that and data
* we didn’t have much action on cancer between 2019 and 2021

The priorities identified for continued focus in 2021 in descending order from highest to lowest were: housing, SUD, Access, Oral Health, Aging, Data, Cancer. New focal areas for 2021 included: emergency preparedness, special health topics (including women’s health, tick daringiseases), health equity, workforce development & shortages, communication & engagement, food insecurity & nutrition. The survey for 2023 will be sent out to Council members within a few days, in the same format as the previous surveys. Results of the survey will help us set our new priorities.

**Data Sharing Agreement**

Kathleen said that Alexis was not able to be here today, but that she has been talking to all the organizations about what data they collect, with an idea of bringing new resources into the community, starting with the public facing information that is already on everybody’s websites. If all is on our website, as a collaborative group we could apply for grants and resources in the name of our health and improving the situation of our residents. This would be a high level data sharing agreement, just agreeing to share what’s already on the organization’s public websites.

**Other Member Updates**

Cindy Trish said that she just got a notice from the Blue Cross Foundation that they are going to look for proposals around improving health equity. She wondered whether the Health Council would just share this information, or whether the Council itself was in a position itself to ask for funds.

Lisa Nagy said that Senator Cyr heads the (legislative) public health committee. Forty people testified on a bill focused on counting the number of people in Massachusetts that are sensitive to radio frequency radiation related to a cell tower being put up in Pittsfield since many children are sick and have had to move their home due to this exposure.

Chantale Patterson announced that thanks to Bob Laskowski and the Advance Care Planning Coalition the hospice has partnered with Honoring Choices Massachusetts and will be offering a virtual workshop on advance care planning documentation on June 14th from 10:30 to 12:00. She’ll send the information to Louise so it can go out to everyone on the Council.

Cindy Trish commented that the monthly news article that Victoria Haeselbarth has been writing for the MV Times is very informative and great at raising awareness of everything we are doing.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:00 am**

**The next regular Health Council meeting will be held via zoom on June 15 at 7:30 am**

Respectfully submitted, Louise Clough, secretary