Dukes County Health Council

Minutes

Via zoom conference

Thursday, February 17, 2022, 7:30 – 9:10 AM

Members present: Ellie Beth, Mike Bellissimo, Victor Capoccia, Louise Clough, Cindy Doyle, Betsy Edge, Beth Folcarelli, Bruce Golden, Alan Hirshberg, Marcy Holmes, Sarah Kuh, Bob Laskowski, Paddy Moore, Dan Pesch, Susan Sanford, Joyce Stiles Tucker, Sheryl Taylor, Christine Todd, Cindy Trish, Mary Jane Williams. Guests present: Chantale Patterson, Jim Wolff, Cathy Wozniak, Alexis Babaian, Denise Schepici, Claire Seguin, Rachel Vargas, Lisa Nagy, Lewis Laskaris, Laura Silber, Julie Fay, Susan Pratt, Kyle Williams

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

**Martha’s Vineyard Hospital Updates:** Denise Schepici started by saying she would talk a little bit about the past, then where they were headed. She then began with the mission of the hospital, which is “to safeguard the health of island residents and visitors by providing and arranging high-quality, accessible medical care. This care will be provided to all, regardless of ability to pay, in an atmosphere that fosters equity, respect and compassion.” She said that the hospital did very well financially in the past year, then described the daily safety huddles, a 30-minute meeting of all managers every day. She noted that COVID cases have declined rapidly in the past month.

A strategic planning steering committee was launched in October 2018. One significant part of the planning involved Windemere, a 30-year-old nursing facility that does not meet the needs of the island’s aging population. She said that Council member Paddy Moore introduced her to Renee Lohman of Navigator Homes, and the hospital is now working with them to develop a new nursing facility based on the Greenhouse model. When COVID hit in March of 2020, the hospital had to put all its work into dealing with the pandemic.

Denise shared pictures of the hospital’s preparation and ongoing team efforts regarding the challenge of COVID, and specifically mentioned Council member Marcy Holmes, a member of the A Team, who has been instrumental in managing many facets of the COVID-related work. More than 56,000 COVID tests have been done and the hospital has administered more than 36,000 vaccinations. 82% of Dukes County residents have been fully vaccinated and 91% have had at least one dose. There has been just one death from COVID. Through all this the hospital has been able to implement many of the strategic plan clinical service line initiatives, and three new physicians will be joining the hospital between now and May.

Challenges to the hospital include: recruitment and retention of staff; workforce housing; and an aging facility – the ambulatory facilities are in the 1972 building, and support services are in the 1929 building. The pandemic continues to be a challenge, as is emergency department boarding of behavioral health patients – a national problem. Acuity and needs have risen during the pandemic, and available workers have decreased. There can be long waits in the emergency department for transfers to more appropriate settings.

Denise noted that 25% of Dukes County residents are 65 or older, much higher than the national average. The hospital has a strong commitment develop health services to address age-related conditions.

 A big focus now is on workforce housing. There in a plan to build housing - 76 bedrooms in various configurations in 5 buildings on the campus of the new skilled nursing facility / Windemere replacement in Edgartown. Denise talked more about Windemere which is 30 years old and very institutional. The new facility will consist of five 14-bedroom homes.

There is a 5-year plan in place to address the need to replace the two oldest buildings, which includes a capitalization plan. It will cost about $125 million to replace those buildings and add the workforce housing on the Windemere site. This is all about planning for healthcare for generations to come.

Victor Capoccia commented on the behavioral health issue and asked how we can bring together all stakeholders as well as neutral parties to collaborate on this. Beth Folcarelli also spoke, saying there is state funding to apply for to support collaborative efforts to address the problem. MV Community Services will be working with the hospital and Island Health Care. Bob asked about how we can transform healthcare and do things in a new way – The Greenhouse model is a good example of that. Claire Seguin responded that a good example would be virtual care – something the hospital has been striving to do for many years. A behavioral health example is a system the hospital has called Care Connect, which can be installed in a patient’s room to allow social workers, case managers and tele-psychiatrists to evaluate a patient. Dan Pesch said that they are able to use specialists remotely which can decrease the number of visits to Boston a patient may need to make in order to get care. The goal is that if you come to MV Hospital with a condition you will be able to get the same care you would get if you went to Mass General. Paddy Moore said that in her experience the hospital was doing everything Denise described and said that telehealth is definitely working - it means you do not have to travel to Boston for medical visits - and the care at the hospital is truly compassionate. She also followed up on Victor’s comments about behavioral health saying that collaboration is not enough, there needs to be ongoing communication among the various entities addressing the behavioral health issues.

Lisa Nagy, a candidate for membership on the Council, introduced herself and said she would like to make a presentation to the Council at a future meeting.

**Coalition to Create the MV Housing Bank:** Julie Fay said they are tracking the legislation to allow a transfer fee on sales of Vineyard Homes, money which would be used to fund attainable housing. They are also looking for support from all island towns for a housing bank. Six towns have agreed to have the housing bank on their warrant articles for the town meetings. Several towns will also have a ballot vote if the article passes at town meeting, so we need to get out the vote for both the warrant article at town meetings and the ballot vote. Over the past 18 months the Coalition has reached out to get feedback from the community about how the housing bank should be structured. An example of something that was added based on feedback was a strengthening of the environmental / climate requirements specifying that a minimum of 75% of housing bank funds will be used for repurposing previously developed land and existing housing stock. If at least 4 towns pass the warrant article and ballot question (if applicable), then the Coalition will file legislation to establish the housing bank. Once that passes, it will come back to the towns for another ballot vote. Julie went on the thank the Council for their support and the partnership with Healthy Aging MV. Mass General Brigham signed on to the transfer fee for the Vineyard and Nantucket. If anyone wants a lawn sign supporting the votes, call Julie at 617-571-5179. Letters of endorsement are still helpful and there is more information on the Coalition website. Laura Silber said that if there are any individuals or organizations on the Council who have not submitted letters of support to the legislators, we really need to do that. Reach out to Laura at Laura@ccmvhb.org. She also said that it is very important to get out the vote in Edgartown as their Finance Committee did not approve the warrant articles. Paddy asked what the major arguments against it have been and how can we answer those arguments. Laura responded that the Coalition Executive Council will be meeting and a document with common misconceptions and frequently asked questions will be released in a couple of days.

**Council Member Updates and Announcements:**

* **Reformulated MV Substance Use Disorder Coalition –** Victor Capoccia first addressed something that had come up earlier in this meeting. He would like to see an island wide workgroup to look at transformation relative to workforce, particularly the broad-based healthcare and behavioral health workforce. He also hopes that behavioral health stakeholders from a broader base will come together in a problem-solving way. He then went on the describe the reformed substance use disorder coalition. There are three workgroups and if any Council members want to get involved, they can contact the workgroup leaders listed here.
	+ Intervention, led by Mike Joyce
	+ Looking at additional residential care, led by Brian Mackey
	+ Medication as an adjunct to treatment, led by Kate Desrosiers

Victor also said that at its last meeting the Coalition voted that all stakeholders would meet monthly, and that the larger group would meet quarterly.

* **A Long Talk Movement –** Sarah Kuh introduced the creator of the A Long Talk Movement, which is a national antiracism movement, Kyle Williams. Kyle said that he has been coming to the Vineyard every summer of his life and that his great grandparents bought property on the Vineyard in the 40’s. Kyle described events after his sons went to the George Floyd protest in DC. A friend sent him a video about the history of racism which he watched then sent to his youngest son’s basketball coach. He later sent it to his other son’s coach. Both white men became antiracists after seeing the video. Since then, it has been used across the country and is being used here on the Vineyard – Council member Sheryl Taylor is using A Long Talk resources in Vineyard schools. Last year his organization developed the Martha’s Vineyard Community of Change. He said that in the last 6 months almost 200 people on the Vineyard have gone through the activation experience. He brought up his website on the screen and described some of the content. Sarah said that once every month there is a Community Conversation which she described as the best place to start as an introduction to the movement. Sheryl Taylor said that all the schools are involved and behind him 110%. For more information visit the website at: <https://www.alongtalk.com>, or contact Kyle at: Kyle@alongtalk.com.

The next regular Health Council meeting will be held via zoom on March 17, 2022.

Respectfully submitted, Louise Clough, secretary