Thursday, July 21, 2022 7:30 – 9:00AM

Members present: Alexis Babaian, Leslie Clapp, Louise Clough, Cindy Doyle, Betsy Edge, Alan Hirshberg, Michael Joyce, Lewis Laskaris, Bob Laskowski, Paddy Moore, Lisa Nagy, Chantale Patterson, Dan Pesch, Susan Pratt, Kathleen Samways, Susan Sanford, Joyce Stiles-Tucker, Sheryl Taylor-Thompson, Christine Todd, Cindy Trish, Lisette Williams, Mary Jane Williams, James Wolff. Guests present: Marina Lent, Lila Fischer, Cathy Wozniak, Liz Durkee, Karen Tewhey, Sue Divorio, Lisa Belcastro, Leah Palmer.

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

**Establishing a Climate Change Committee as part of DCHC** – Liz Durkee, MV Commission Climate Change Planner, started by saying that a Climate Action Plan has been developed which includes six different thematic areas, one of which is public health and safety. The goal for public health is that island residents understand environmental and climate change impacts to human health & wellbeing, and everyone has access to support that builds self-sufficiency and resilience. There are three objectives, the first is that a sub-committee at Dukes County Health Council is developed to facilitate public health education in the community – to providers and to the community. First steps are to propose the sub-committee, recruit members, and survey Council members about their knowledge of climate change health-related issues. The second objective would be to reach out to the Brazilian population working with the Inter-Island public health collaboration. And the third objective would be working with the boards of health. Lila Fischer said that the Council’s sub-committee would have an advisory role and would collaborate on some of the education pieces. Lew Laskaris asked if ticks would be part of the program and Lila said they would be. Bob Laskowski asked about the make-up of the subcommittee – just Council members, or others? Size of committee? Louise Clough said that she met with Liz and Lila last week and agree that membership could include non-Council members and she asked Mary Jane if her friend was interested in being part of this. Mary Jane said that her friend was very interested. Lila suggested having a representative from ICAN on the committee. Mary Jane said that interested Council members should let her know, and Louise suggested that the Coordinating Committee discuss this in August. In response to a question from Bob, Liz said that the Climate Action Plan should be available by the end of next week on: [www.thevineyardway.org](http://www.thevineyardway.org), and Lila will send it to Louise so that it can be sent out to all Council members.

**Homelessness Update and Introduction of new Harbor Homes Director** – Karen Tewhey, who has been with Harbor Homes since its inception, is moving on to part-time work. She will be mentoring the new executive director thorough the end of the year and will also be focusing on grant writing, as about two thirds of the money comes through grants. Susan Diverio, the new director, said that she spent the last 25 years in St. Croix in the US Virgin Islands, as the director of education for a domestic violence/sexual assault non-profit agency. Karen then said that Harbor Homes has hired a consultant and will be developing a strategic plan. She also said that she is looking for space for a winter shelter – there is money to rent space, but a place has not been identified yet. Last year Community Services let them use the empty Early Child Center, but that is no longer available. She asked that anyone with space available with a kitchen, bathrooms, and access for those who don’t have cars get in touch with her.

Current housing includes only 12 spots – six for men and 6 for women. The shelter is not year-round, but they are going to try to expand the hours. A hotel respite program serves at least 12 to 15 persons and families over the winter. There is a County Homeless Prevention caseworker whose office is at Harbor Homes. Bob asked whether there were any plans for a permanent winter shelter, and Karen said that is the number one priority of the strategic plan. If they had a permanent shelter, they could also have a warming center at the shelter location. Christine asked whether there has been any conversation with the churches about resuming the overnight shelters they had provided in the past. Karen said that would be the default position if they don’t find a winter shelter space. It’s harder to provide services at multiple locations, particularly during COVID, with needed supplies at all locations, and also the churches are not available during the days. As an aside, Karen said that the Island Clergy Association has a fund they have used for Harbor Homes clients – to help pay a rent bill or moving expense. And the search for a winter shelter is just starting, so Karen will come back to the Council if possible identified locations are not made available for this winter.

Louise wanted to put in a good word for a fundraiser for Harbor Homes, acknowledging that it would not raise enough money for a shelter: an art show and sale at the Grange Hall on August 2 and 3. There are 26 artists represented and she recommended that anyone interested in art should go and buy art because it will help Harbor Homes.

Harbor Homes has a new client, an 18-year-old Brazilian girl who does not speak English, and Christine suggested the County’s Community Ambassador Program (CAP) as a resource.

**Covid Vaccine Update** – Sheryl Taylor Thompson said that since September 2021 there have been seven mobile vaccine clinics at the high school, and there is funding for five more. These are done in conjunction with primary community partners including: CAP, BOHs, MVH, IHC, MVPS, NAACP, and We Stand Together. To date, 3,719 vaccines have been administered. These include childhood vaccinations as well as COVID. Language assistance was an important part of this effort, and language assistance was provided at the mobile events. About 335 participants were surveyed asking what language they were most comfortable using to communicate about health, legal and other technical issues. Close to 30% said it was Brazilian Portuguese or Spanish, and a similar proportion indicated that they had used an interpreter that day at the vaccination site. The next mobile clinic event will be on July 31 at the high school from 8am to 5pm.

There is a new school immunization clinic initiative designed to address the challenges in immunization requirements and school registration. Leah Palmer, the English Language Learner Director for Martha’s Vineyard Public Schools, said that over the years there have been problems with getting new immigrant students’ immunization records translated, and getting the students registered at either MV Hospital or Island Health Care. Last year there were 150 new families enrolled. Meetings have been held with the hospital, IHC, and the Boards of Health to see how they could frontload support for these families so the children could get vaccines right away and get to school right away preventing a lag in their education. They have developed a flyer with a survey for families which is being distributed through the Brazilian owned businesses on the Island, and through the schools. Interpreters will contact the families who have completed the survey and setting up appointments for an August 14 clinic where families will be able to register for a healthcare provider, register for school, register for insurance, and get their immunization records translated.

Bob asked if influenza vaccine will be offered, and Sheryl replied that they have offered this.

Alexis Babaian talked about a parallel initiative. Island Health Care is in the midst of its community needs assessment and a survey is out to the Brazilian community asking about healthcare access, and also about language. There will be a focus group next week where they will be able to ask more open-ended questions.

Sheryl’s presentation will be sent to Council members and is considered part of the meeting minutes. You can reach the CAP program by calling Sheryl at: 904-861-7791, and the CAP website is: <https://mvcap.mailchimpsites.com>

**Establishing a Mental Health work group –** Bob Laskowski introduced Lisa Belcastro who has been with the National Association for Mental Illness (NAMI) for 5 years here on the Island. Her role with NAMI has always been to facilitate classes, programs, or help for people who have a loved one with a mental health issue. The goal of NAMI is to educate, support and advocate. Everything NAMI offers to the public is free, and there is a NAMI peer group at the high school. She acknowledges that there are many great mental health providers on the Vineyard, but not enough to care for everyone who needs services. The ability to use telehealth has been a major help, but we lack an inpatient mental health setting and an out-patient daily program to provide services.

Lisa Nagy commented that there is a large amount of money available to train physicians about suicidal patients. She stressed that we need to look at medical aspects of what’s wrong with people who are suicidal. Adrenal insufficiency is an example she used. Christine Todd asked Lisa Belcastro what age group she saw as escalating with mental health issues, and Lisa said that teens were a big group, possibly 1 in 6 or higher. Middle-aged men and seniors are also higher numbers. And these are just the people who are reaching out for help. Christine also asked that, given the numbers, was there anything going on in the schools right now that’s working this more into to curriculum. Lisa said that last year the school brought in a Mental Health First Aid course which every sophomore now takes as part of their health education requirement.

Bob discussed the charter for a mental health work group that he sent out to Council members prior to the meeting. He said that based on the information about mental health issues presented at the last three Council meetings, a workgroup will be formed to determine what to do with it. It’s a short-term workgroup that would report back to the Council about what our role should be. Purposes of the workgroup would be to evaluate roles for the Health Council, identify the limits of Health Council involvement – including what not to do, and recommend next steps to the full Council to review. The workgroup would have a chair or co-chairs appointed by the Chair of the Council, and 5 to 7 members drawn from the Council and key members of the community. Either the chair or one of the co-chairs will be a member of the Council. He thought the workgroup would meet 2 or 3 times, reporting back to the Council at the October meeting. Paddy Moore suggested it would be good to define what we mean by mental health, and Bob agreed and said that gets into the boundaries stuff – what the Council should not do. Louise said that she was pleased that the workgroup was to be short term focusing on the possible role of the Council and identifying the limits of the Council’s role. Christine asked about the makeup of the committee and whether Bob had identified stakeholders in the Community, such as Community Services and the Hospital. Bob responded that he had not done so, but this short-term workgroup is looking at broader questions about definitions and roles, and needs to have some expertise but not necessarily major stakeholders. Such a group may be proposed as an outcome of the group’s work, but that is not determined yet. Paddy supported Bob’s outline of the committee’s work and makeup. Lisa Nagy suggested that the workgroup be larger, perhaps 12 people, so that more perspectives would be weighed and if someone doesn’t show up for a meeting there would still be a quorum. Bob agreed that a small workgroup is somewhat exclusionary, but the work of the group is specific and limited. Karen Tewhey asked if there was a needs assessment of all mental health services, and if not is this something the workgroup or the Council should do. Bob said that this is something the workgroup might end up suggesting and it is something that could be appropriate for the Council’s Health Information committee to take on.

A motion was moved, seconded, and passed to establish a mental health workgroup, and Bob said that the Coordinating Committee would meet to determine how to populate the group.

**Recovery Month** - Louise Clough and Mike Joyce. Louise said that Kathleen Samways, who had to leave the meeting – has asked for a discussion of Recovery Month – the topic came up at the recent SUD meeting. Victor Capoccia could not be here today so he can’t speak to it either, and Louise asked if Mike Joyce could give the Council some information about it. Mike said that it came up at the end of the meeting and Karen Casper was trying to put together things, but nothing is on place right now. Recovery Month is in September and Karen hoped that various organizations would have something to offer during the month, and if not, start working on a plan for next year’s Recovery Month. Louise said that she would reach out to Karen to see if there is information we should have, and anything that we could send out to Council members.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:07**

**The next regular Health Council meeting will be held via zoom on September 15, 2022, at 7:30 am**

**(no meeting in August)**

Respectfully submitted, Louise Clough, secretary