Thursday, June 16, 2022 7:30 – 9:00AM

Members present: Alexis Babaian, Mike Bellissimo, Victor Capoccia, Louise Clough, Cindy Doyle, Alan Hirshberg, Marcy Holmes, Michael Joyce, Sarah Kuh, Lewis Laskaris, Bob Laskowski, Lisa Nagy, Dan Pesch, Susan Pratt, Kathleen Samways, Susan Sanford, Joyce Stiles-Tucker, Martina Thornton, Christine Todd, Cindy Trish, Lisette Williams, Mary Jane Williams. Guests present: Victoria Haeselbarth, Marina Lent, Lila Fischer, Cathy Wozniak, Cynthia Mitchell, Patrick Roden-Reynolds, Lorraine Schratz, Jane.

**Call meeting to order / Approval of May 19 meeting minutes:** Mary Jane Williams called the meeting to order at 7:30 AM. The May minutes were moved, seconded, and approved.

**Election of New Coordinating Committee members –** Louise Clough asked for a motion to approve the addition of Kathleen Samways and Sheryl Taylor-Thompson to the Coordinating Committee. Motion was moved, seconded, and passed.

**Inter-Island Public Health Excellence Collaborative** – Kathleen Samways started by giving some updates about Island Health Care, saying that today we’d discuss the Public Health Grant and the Inter-Island Public Health Excellence Collaborative.Cynthia Mitchell, Island Health Care CEO then described the Public Health Excellence Collaborative. She said that in early 2019 she presented a proposal to the Council for an Island integrated public health collaborative, now being called a public health *excellence* collaborative based on the work that has been done since the program started. We have no official regional public health department – each town has its own board of health and health agent. There is no systematic community needs assessment or routine data collection, but there is a growing need to assess public health data on Social Determinants of Health, including health equity. There is growing municipal, state, and federal budget support for health / social environmental services without a strategic plan for integration, monitoring and measuring outcomes. In 2019 the county and individual towns supported the provision of space above the Center for Living to launch a proposed collaborative, but the pandemic put early implementation on pause. IHC health center, MV boards of health and MV Hospital solidly forged a partnership through the highly successful 2-year community-wide COVID response. There is an ongoing and increasing need for integrated workforce development and training.

In 2022, the six Vineyard boards of health and Nantucket health department received a multi-year state action for public health excellence (SAPHE) grant funding, with Island Health Care as the organizational home for their three new shared employees: public health biologist Patrick Roden-Reynolds, public health inspector Celena Guimaraes, and community/population health specialist Alexis Babaian. The vision for the collaborative is excellence, resilience, equity, and sustainability in health, housing, food safety & security, and climate & environment. Workgroups will be formed – similar to MV Commission’s Climate Action Plan; they will be for integrated public health services, ongoing needs assessment, public outreach and engagement, strategic plan and response, workforce development and training, and performance measurement. The team members, by position, were listed as well as a partial list of actual and proposed partners, and a draft organizational chart. Cynthia’s presentation will be sent out to Council members and is considered part of the meeting minutes.

Kathleen asked Alexis to introduce herself. Alexis said that she has a background in food and nutrition equity and also in economics and public relations. One thing she’s been working on is building health data sets like the work of the Island Rural Scholars, and also looking at all the camps on the Island from a public health perspective, and how they create safe spaces for the children. Kathleen then introduced Patrick, a wildlife biologist who comes with a natural resource management background. He’s interested in our deer population and in ticks and tick-borne disease. Patrick said he would be working on vector-borne disease, both from ticks and mosquitos. He will be doing education, as well as monitoring and surveillance. From May through July, he’s doing tick yard surveys at the owner’s request, looking for ticks and letting the homeowners know what they can do to reduce the chance of a tick bite. Reach out to him to request a survey at: [www.mvboh.com/yardsurvey](http://www.mvboh.com/yardsurvey) This is a link to a form on the County website described by Martina Thornton. There is a $50 fee/donation for the survey; Patrick will ask for a donation but will do the survey even if the person makes no donation. He’s planning to do public outreach through the libraries and is also collecting mosquitos to send to the State for pathogen testing, and monitoring ticks on some Land Bank trails to see changes over time. A major group he’ll be reaching out to will be landscapers. Kathleen then talked about Celena, the health inspector who worked with Dick and Omar in the tick program in 2019 and was a connector to the Brazilian population. She is currently working on all the certifications she needs to be a health inspector.

Bob Laskowski had two questions: how does the relationship with Nantucket work and what kind of back yards Patrick looking for? Cynthia Mitchell said that Nantucket is the fiscal agent and Island Health is the operating agency. Chilmark health agent Marina Lent then talked about how Alexis, Patrick and Celena would be working with/for all the health agents on the Island and, if requested, on Nantucket. She said that obviously there would not be a Vineyard and Nantucket board of health, but the model is shared services, collaboration about public health services. She’s looking forward to working with the data – what the Council’s health information committee already has and has access to, what health related data is available - or not available to us – to get real-time health data for this group and for public reporting. And Patrick will look at any back yard.

Cynthia Mitchell then gave a brief update on other Island Health Care initiatives. They have received funding and identified space at Mariner’s Landing to house a dental clinic as well as other health services. They just received a grant from MV Youth for half a million dollars, and combined with federal money and donations already raised, have $1,100,000 in hand. The dental clinic will have 4 chairs and should open in the fall of 2023.

**Rural Scholars:** Dan Pesch said that his group met early this week to review three projects. Two of them need a lot of work – and the rural scholars committee could use some help. Susan Pratt had a good idea for a project, and the rural scholars themselves would like us to study prior projects and consolidate some of those findings. The problem with that is that we’d have to do this on our own as a Council and we’d need a bigger committee to do so. Healthy Aging MV had a proposal last year which they’ve added to, and it looks like it’s ready to go. The project would look at existing resources to provide home care and other services to disabled and older adults. They would look at barriers to expanding services, with a focus on workforce issues and opportunities among the Island’s caregivers, particularly among the minority community such as the Brazilians and Jamaicans. The Rural Scholars committee is recommending this project, but he is open to discussion. He is also asking for funding to bring the students to the Vineyard. Housing is available but bringing the students in cars on the ferry needs financial support.

Alexis asked to comment. She said that she did a qualitative analysis of all the past rural scholars projects. She looked at how many times a thematic area has been brought up, how many projects included them, then broke them down further. For example, under social determinant of health is housing and homelessness. There are links for more information in each category, and updates on projects at the end. This is easier than looking at each project now on the website, and when the rural scholars get here, they can look at this and see all the data from the past projects in one spot. Alexis will finish this soon and share the link so everyone can access it. Dan said Alexis’ work was exactly what the rural scholar students asked for last year. Dan also addressed one of Alexis’ earlier comments about domestic violence and social determinants of health and said that was related to Susan Pratt’s idea for a rural scholars’ project, but that it is difficult to engage people on sensitive topics including when there are language or access issues.

A motion was moved, seconded, and approved to have the rural scholars carry out the homecare project and fund their ferry travel.

**Continuing the Discussion of Mental Health Issues** – Bob Laskowski started by saying that we’d had substantial discussions about mental health at the last two Council meetings, and that committee member Lisa Nagy asked if she could present some information about various medical issues related to mental health. After this meeting the Coordinating Committee will synthesize all the information and decide what next steps the Council should take.

Lisa began by saying that she sees patients from the schools, and other people, who have environmental issues and mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and insomnia. The main thing she talked about today was postural tachycardia, POTS – when the patient stands up, blood pools in the legs and the heart rate goes up, often causing anxiety, and they may self-treat with coffee or nicotine. Blood pressure may also go up and an Italian study indicated that standing blood pressures should be taken in young people as increased blood pressure on standing may lead to hypertension as they age, increasing the risk of strokes. She said she’s seeing a lot of this -like an epidemic, then asked her guest, Lorraine Schratz, an MGH pediatrician who specializes in cardiology, to speak. Lorraine said she sees dizzy kids, mostly teenagers, at every clinic that she has. Many are orthostatic, and many can be treated without medication, but some are more serious and need medication. Many have POTS, which Lisa was talking about, and which was recognized in 1993. Many patients have additional symptoms, and in severe cases they are out of school. And COVID made this worse. There is a website – Dysautonomia International – which has a lot of information for people who might be interested. Lisa said that she presented twice at grand rounds about dysautonomia and addiction and mental illness on the Vineyard, saying it’s worse than anywhere else and due to air quality. On the Vineyard it’s indoor air quality and mold, which produce mycotoxins (labs can test for this). Symptoms that are thought to be mental, are physical. She said that we need to take standing blood pressures on everyone who sees the school nurse and on clinic patients at the hospital.

One of Lisa’s patients – Jane, an immunologist – spoke about coming to the Vineyard to be treated after being exposed to mold in an office building. Her many symptoms got worse over two years, including anxiety that was so extreme that after 20 years of public speaking she could no longer speak to a few people in a small board room. After 6 months of treatment with Lisa she is now feeling much better.

Bob acknowledged to Lisa that dysautonomia is a tricky business for physicians, and said that a lot of her message would seem to be addressed to medical colleagues in terms of her suggestions for screening protocols, then asked if she had one message for the Health Council, what would it be today? She said that we need to push people (Community Services, the hospital, the schools) to work on the mold issue, work up patients and fix people fast. Bob reiterated that the Coordinating Committee will review all the information related to the various mental health presentations and decide what next steps the Council should take.

Mary Jane thanked everyone for their participation and ended the meeting at 9 AM.

**The next regular Health Council meeting will be held via zoom on July 21, 2022.**

Respectfully submitted, Louise Clough, secretary