Dukes County Health Council

Minutes

Via zoom conference

Thursday, January 21, 2021 7:30 - 9:00 AM

Members present: Ellie Beth, Victor Capoccia, Tnisha Chandler, Leslie Clapp, Louise Clough, Cynthia Doyle, Betsy Edge, Beka ElDeiry, Alan Ganapol, Bruce Golden, Tom Hallahan, Sarah Kuh, Robert Laskowski, Karen McPhail, Paddy Moore, Kathleen Perrota, Dan Pesch, Myra Stark, Joyce Styles-Tucker, Martina Thornton, Christine Todd, Mary Jane Williams, Terre Young, Marie Zadah. Guests present: Karen Tewhey, Dorie Godfey, Lisa BelCastro, Sheryl Taylor, Cindy Trish, Beth Folcarelli, Nora Wilcox, Denise Schepici, Claire Seguin

**Meeting Called to Order** at 7:35 AM**:** Mary Jane Williams ~ Welcome to all. Request for approval of November minutes, moved, seconded, and unanimously approved.

**Homeless Shelter Update:** Karen Tewey reported that Harbor Homes is operating a winter shelter at the Whaling Church through March, with 15 paid staff and 8 volunteers. It has a capacity of 13 and serves three meals a day. The hospital has donated $150,000 which covers employees and Bad Martha’s Brewery gave significant donation which pays for most of the food. Separate space for females – have had two. Dorie Godfrey has set up all the COVID protocols and Lisa BelCastro is running the shelter.

Dorie gave special thanks to staff at the hospital, the Edgartown board of health, and Christine Todd.

Lisa BelCastro said the shelter is amazing and has the best staff on the planet. All food is brought in, on a budget of $20 a day per person – all from Vineyard restaurants, or Vineyard chefs. There have been 8 registered men and 2 registered women. There were two COVID-related incidents. And a man who wandered away from rest home on the mainland showed up at the shelter – seemed sick – was sent to the hospital and tested positive for COVID. This did not impact staffing. No one – staff or guests – was in close contact with the man, and those who have been tested were negative.

**In Memory of Murray Frank:** Mary Jane asked Paddy Moore to say a few words about Murray Frank, who recently passed. Paddy said that Murray Frank established the Rural Scholars program with a $20,000 grant, about 17or 18 years ago. Cindy Doyle said that in speaking with him he said that his intention was to bring students to the Vineyard, hoping some would work here, or in other rural settings. Paddy also spoke about Murray’s work on getting affordable healthcare – an idea that became the Massachusetts program for affordable care.

**Dental Health Committee Report:** Bruce Golden reported that he met with Leslie Clapp and Martina Thornton about using a room at the Center for Living for a dental office. Because the space is small and would need water, Martina will look for other appropriate space. Karen Gear is chairing the group. They are working with Christine Mitchell of Island Health Care to have the new dental clinic be part of that organization, which as a Federally Qualified Health Center will be able to serve Health Safety Net patients and get reimbursed for their care.

Paddy asked how many patients could be served and what is the need. Bruce said that the need is huge. The now closed hospital program had 1500 active patients with a waiting list of 500.

**MVH COVID Vaccine Update:** Denise Scepici gave a broad overview of the vaccine rollout. She reminded us that this is based on the vaccines supplied by the State and that the phase that the State is in for vaccinations. MVH has completed vaccination of all hospital staff, with very few reactions – some mild reactions. First responders have also been vaccinated. They are starting to vaccinate community providers such as pharmacists and visiting nurses. The hospital has developed an appointment system and are using the hospital lobby – people check in, wait in lobby, get vaccinated in another space, then return to the lobby for 15 minutes to be monitored for any immediate side effects. When the first dose is received an appointment is made to return for the second dose. They are currently vaccinating 90 – 100 patients per day, and plan to be up to 500 doses a day. The hospital is coordinating with the system – MGB -which is working very closely with the State. Denise acknowledged that the demand for vaccine exceeds the supply and she is looking forward to a new vaccine which needs only one dose and may be available later in February.

In a separate effort, all residents and staff of Windemere received the vaccine from an outside pharmacy provider.

Claire Seguin addressed a variety of questions, including: how will I know it’s my time; what about people who don’t have a physician at the hospital; what about people in their 80s and 90s and their caregivers; what about those in senior housing and seniors who don’t use the internet; what about our diverse community? She said the hospital will do a lot of communicating through Patient Gateway, and outreach through phone calls. They have “touch points” for 20,400 patients who have used hospital services in the last 3 years, even if just for a lab test or x-ray. They can search this data base in the electronic medical records (EMR) to determine who should be contacted to get the vaccine. For example, they have identified about 2,200 people in the category of over 75 and/or 2 or more comorbidities. This group will be eligible for the vaccine in early February (the State’s Phase 2).

Denise said that they meet with the press and others weekly and will let the public know when the hospital has vaccines. She prefers that people not call the hospital or the primary care practices to find out if they can get a vaccine, but to wait until they are contacted. And she reminded us that the vaccine is not a free pass – everyone still needs to mask up and continue to take all precautions.

Christine Todd said that the County Commissioners were approached by Jim Malkin, asking them to send a letter to DPH Commissioner Bharel regarding vaccination of Steamship Authority workers. Martina Thornton clarified that the letter indicated an expectation that those workers be vaccinated on the Cape, as many of them live there, not on the Vineyard. Claire will follow up on this.

Sarah Kuh asked Tnisha Chandler to describe what the Tribe is doing. Tnisha reported that the Tribe has received vaccine directly from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and has started vaccinations with the Tribal government, then people in direct contact with patients, then people 70 or older.

Joyce Stiles-Tucker asked about home-bound seniors, and Denise responded that they are looking at picking up some and driving them to the vaccine site. Claire said they’d worked with EMS about doing some testing of homebound people, they may be able to give some vaccines to that population which does not constitute a large number of people.

Christine asked whether the hospital could use some volunteers. Denise said not to register people, but they could be in the lobby to observe people after they get the vaccine, and generally help out in the lobby. Potential volunteers should email Denise.

Mary Jane suggested posting something on Islanders counteract all the negativity there, but Denise did not want to use that forum. She does agree that social media is a useful tool, and the hospital does post on Facebook.

Denise also took the opportunity to wish Tom Hallahan the best, as he leaves Hospice of MV. She also acknowledged Mary Holmes who she described as the epicenter of the hospital’s vaccine program.

**Nominating Committee Report:** Terre Young reported that we have three candidates who are here today and have been participating in the meetings as guests: Cindy Trish, Beth Folcarelli, and Sheryl Taylor. A new candidate is Dr. Alan Hirshberg who worked in the Emergency Room many years ago and is now back on the Island and interested in joining the Council. Council members received applications and resumes for the candidates earlier this week. She and Louise contacted all Council members whose terms are expiring to see if they want to stay on the Council and be re-appointed to another 2-year term. Barbara Rush will not be returning as she is going back to school to study for a DNP. Terre is also going to leave the Council.

Terre made a motion to accept all four candidates and the motion was seconded and passed. She then said that our vote will be sent to the County and they will then vote in February or March. We will welcome our new members at our March meeting, and they will be welcome as guests at our February meeting. Terre thanked everyone for their work and their support during the years she has been on the Council.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:55** after Mary Jane thanked everyone for all they do every day.

The next regular Health Council meeting will be held via zoom on February 18, 2021.

Respectfully submitted, Louise Clough, secretary