

DUKES COUNTY HEALTH COUNCIL

Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

July 24, 2026

Select Boards of the Seven Towns of Dukes County

Aquinnah • Chilmark • Edgartown • Oak Bluffs • Tisbury • West Tisbury • Gosnold

Letter of Support for the Martha's Vineyard Island-Wide Emergency Management and Response Coordination Strategic Integration and Implementation Plan

Dear Members of the Select Boards:

On behalf of the Dukes County Health Council, I am writing to express our strong support for the Martha's Vineyard Island-Wide Emergency Management and Response Coordination Strategic Integration and Implementation Plan, developed in coordination with the Olson Group, and to encourage each Town's endorsement and continued investment in its implementation.

The Health Council regularly convenes health and human service providers across all seven towns of Dukes County, and our members have long recognized that the Island's public health infrastructure is only as resilient as its capacity to coordinate during emergencies. Storms, public health emergencies, and other regional incidents do not respect town lines, yet our current emergency management structure remains organized on a town-by-town basis. Over the past few months, the Council has circulated the plan and taken the time in our meetings to review and have members' questions addressed. At our July meeting, members voted to support this plan, which offers a thoughtful, actionable framework for closing that gap.

We are particularly supportive of the plan's proposed island-wide Emergency Management Coordinator position. In our experience, the absence of a single point of coordination has repeatedly complicated the timely sharing of resources, information, and response capacity among our towns' health and human service networks. A dedicated coordinator would strengthen communication between municipal emergency management, the healthcare community, and the social service organizations our members represent, and would help ensure that vulnerable populations — including elders, individuals with disabilities, and those with limited access to transportation or resources — are not overlooked in emergency planning and response.

The Dukes County Health Council urges the Select Boards of all seven towns to formally endorse this plan and to support the funding and staffing necessary to implement it, including the Emergency Management Coordinator position. We view this as a critical investment in the health, safety, and resilience of our entire Island community.

Thank you for your consideration. We welcome the opportunity to serve as a continued partner and resource as this important work moves forward.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Samways

On behalf of the Dukes County Health Council