

## Omar Johnson

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**From:** Keith Chatinover <kchatinover@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 17, 2020 9:43 AM  
**To:** aquinnahboardofhealth@comcast.net; boh@chilmarkma.gov; mpoole@edgartown-ma.us; Meegan Lancaster; mvalley@tisburyma.gov; boh@westtisbury-ma.gov  
**Cc:** Martina Thornton, Dukes County Manager  
**Subject:** Collaboration amidst COVID-19

To the island's Boards of Health,

Thank you so much for your hard work to help the island community prepare and deal with this unprecedented pandemic. We all realize the incredible challenges you are facing adapting to the rapidly changing public health landscape. The points made below reflect the numerous conversations I've had with members of our community and local organizations in the last few days that may help you address community needs:

I want to encourage and stress the necessity for more collaboration for direct public messaging from the six Boards of Health. The need for consistent, frequent, and coordinated messaging has never been greater, and islanders are looking to you for direct communication that is consistent across all towns. Too many islanders are relying on word-of-mouth and social media to access information about Martha's Vineyard's preparation plans instead of the towns or state, as the information offered between the town sites is not consistent from town to town, and specific information on the implementation of social distancing has not been readily accessible. Daily decisions vary town-by-town leading to confusion in the community, and a lack of understanding for the need to immediately change personal behaviors to comply with social distancing.

Going forward, the six towns, as well as the county, in order to clearly signal the need for island-wide consistent compliance, must present a unified and simultaneous messaging front about the Vineyard's response to COVID-19. Ideally, this would come through the Boards of Health, all at the same time -- this coordination is critical. For example, if one or several towns close libraries, but not all, it sends a mixed message and the community doesn't know how to take the closures or respond appropriately. We need to recognize that we have many situations where town-by-town messaging is very appropriate, but in an unprecedented public health crisis, the messaging has to be in one coordinated voice for maximum impact on behavior. This can and will quickly change community behavior island-wide.

When we have a hurricane approaching, clear messaging goes out to the community that is consistent and island-wide, and there is rapid compliance to warnings and immediate adjustments in community behavior. I would suggest that utilizing a similar approach will rapidly change the behavior of the island population to move the community into better compliance with the changes needed to stop the spread of the virus. Consistent, direct messaging from the combined Boards of Health and hospital, in tandem, to the entire island community is absolutely vital. As more regions of the country move into lockdown, we should be aware that the island may soon be moving in this direction as well. Working now to streamline and combine messaging will prepare critical local information pathways.

I also know that this cannot be a one-way street and that we are here if you need help, particularly in setting up proper technological channels. Speaking from my perspective as a County Commissioner, there is nothing within our authority I am unwilling to do if it means keeping our island community safe. Please continue to update and coordinate with Martina Thornton and the entire county government. We are committed to playing an islandwide role in coordination and

nation, and I can also connect you with experienced community organizers to assist your  
Again, thank you for your hard work up until this point and moving forward.

Keith Chatinover

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