

Committee on Public Safety

*Councilor Maureen T. Carney, Chair
Councilor Jesse M. Adams
Councilor William H. Dwight
Councilor David A. Murphy*

Committee on Public Safety Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building 212 Main Street, Northampton, MA

Meeting Minutes

7/6/2015 - Minutes

1. Activate NCTV Camera To Record Meeting

2. New Business

None

3. Members Present/Absent

Present at the meeting were Councilor Carney (Chair), Councilor Murphy, and Councilor Dwight. Councilor Adams was absent.

4. Announcement Of Audio/Video Recording Of Meeting

Councilor Carney announced that the meeting would be video and audio taped.

5. Public Comment

None.

6. Approval Of Meeting Minutes

Councilor Dwight moved to approve the meeting minutes of June 1, 2015; Councilor Murphy seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Adams).

7. Departmental Presentations

7.I. Presentation By The Public Health Department

Merridith O'Leary was on hand to give a presentation about the Public Health Department's number one pressing issue that they are dealing with: opioid addiction.

A \$550,000 grant was awarded to the Public Health Dept. from DPH Bureau of Substance Abuse. It is five year grant; the majority of the money will be used to fund a full-time coordinator position to assess the opioid and heroin addiction issue in Hampshire County, identify partners, build capacity, and come up with reduction strategies to reduce the opioid deaths.

The program is called "Hampshire Hope"; the grant was originally written to support 7 communities,

however, because of the DA's office involvement, the program will be far more reaching in Hampshire County. Hampshire HOPE is a collaboration of individuals, health care organizations, community groups, social services agencies, government agencies, local health departments, Office of Northwestern DA, law enforcement agencies, first responders, and others who have joined together in a comprehensive effort to reduce and prevent opioid use and abuse in Hampshire County.

The first step was to look at the number of deaths as a result of opioid overdose and evaluate the statistics associated with those deaths, such as where the death occurred, what the specific drug was that caused the death, etc. The death information sources came from the Mass State Police and the Dept. of Public Health. The two sources are not always consistent. DPH reports all OD fatalities, where Mass State Police reports only people who are dead upon arrival, die during transport, or die within 48 hours of admittance to Emergency Room or Inpatient.

Director O'Leary shared information about the Number of Unintentional Opioid Overdose Deaths by County in Massachusetts for the years 2000 - 2014. Ms. O'Leary explained that one of the reasons for the rise in addiction is due to the misuse of prescription drugs. One of the strategies used to prevent misuse is a community drug roundup program. There is also a prescription monitoring program in Massachusetts; 49 states have a monitoring program, however, many states do not coordinate or share information allowing a prescription drug abuser to go undetected until it is too late. Director O'Leary explained that the heroin of today has a higher efficiency rate than the heroin of the 1970's.

As a task force Hampshire Hope has come up with a resource guide and a brochure to spread community awareness. They have also developed an index sized leaflet that explains about the Good Samaritan Law. The goal is to let everyone know that the Good Samaritan Law protects witnesses of an overdose who call for help. They are also working to get NARCAN more readily available to the public. NARCAN is a drug that reverses the effects of a narcotic. The cost for NARCAN has more than doubled, however, it is now available without a prescription. It is not the type of substance that can be administered by the overdosed patient.

Three strategies that Hampshire Hope will address during its first year are:

1. Too many 8 - 12th graders have misused prescription opioid, the gateway drug to heroin.
2. Too many people are addicted to heroin and opioids.
3. Not enough people are entering into drug rehab programs.

Councilor Murphy asked whether there was any growing concern about mosquitos. Last year the virus disease numbers were very low. This was contrary to what was expected due to the previous year's occurrences. Director O'Leary is trying to establish a mosquito control district. The state does do testing, however, not in the western part of the state. In the western part of the state there are 7 communities that belong to a mosquito control district. Northampton is not part of any district; DPH promised to come out and set traps, however, they came during the fall when the mosquito population is diminished. The Public Health Department was also told that they could not continue surveillance in our area. Ms. O'Leary is talking with other communities to form a Pioneer Valley mosquito control district. The state is saying that the effort will need to go through legislation and could drag on. Northampton lost its licensed pesticide applicator when Mr. Fred Pirog retired from the Public Works Department. There will be issues around treating wetlands and catch basins. So the Public Health Dept. is trying to figure out what it would take to become part of a mosquito control district. Right now it looks like to cost to Northampton will be \$70,000. As part of the network, our community would receive an assessment of wet land areas, any type of treatment necessary, and community outreach education. If there is a real public health emergency, the network would cover the outbreak.

An alternative to joining a control district is to have UMASS do the testing. They have the equipment that was given to them by DPH in 2002. The students can set the traps. The DPH has said they do not want this do be done.

It is Director O'Leary's understanding that the Mayor is in favor of becoming part of a misquoto control district and is willing to write a letter of intent stating his position. Councilor Dwight asked if a letter from the Committee on Public Safety would help; Director O'Leary responded, "Absolutely". Director O'Leary will send boiler plate language to the committee.

Regarding ticks, Director O'Leary suggested that more testing needs to be done of intact ticks. Dr. Rich will subsidize the testing of a tick for four diseases. The department is focusing on prevention. She does not believe curtailing outdoor events is the answer. Rather, she believes, public education is important.

8. Adjourn

At 5:50 pm, Councilor Dwight moved to adjourn; Councilor Murphy seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Adams).

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