

**TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES**  
**Mental Health and Substance Abuse Committee**  
**Town Hall Council Chambers**  
**July 26, 2017, Wednesday**

Present: Thomas J. Lacey, Chairman  
Michael Molisse, Vice Chairman  
Robert Conlon, Councilor  
Brian McDonald, Councilor

Absent: Patrick O'Connor, Councilor

Also Present: Paul Williams, Drug Free Grant Coordinator  
Greg Davis, Fallon Ambulance Service

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Chairman Lacey called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. He noted that Councilor O'Connor wants to be present but the Senate is still in session. He hopes to be able to make it.

**ISSUE- Raise awareness of Opioid Epidemic / Discuss International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31, 2017- Councilor Thomas J. Lacey**

Chairman Lacey reported that he asked for the meeting in response to an email to the Council and several conversations with Gail Henderson and an upcoming vigil, taking place on International Overdoes Awareness Day, August 31<sup>st</sup>. There will be a vigil at Brad Hawes Park to recognize the drug epidemic facing the community. There has been much work and effort by this group, "Learn to Cope", to raise awareness of the magnitude of the problem. Gail Henderson told a story of her only son, Andrew who died of an overdose two years ago. She explained how he battled depression, anxiety and substance abuse issues much of his life. He ultimately used heroin because the pills he was using became too expensive. She told of her heartbreaking efforts to get him help, medical attention and support and programs to treat his addiction. Drug overdose deaths far surpass gun and car deaths. Neighboring towns provide resources. The committee wants to prevent another family from going through what she, her family and other members have. She wants to bring awareness of this issue to the forefront.

Kerwin Doherty, 5 Mutton Lane- told of his son Garrett Kenney's 7-year battle with addiction. He died on 9/25/15 of a deadly dose of fentanyl. The medical examiner told Mr. Doherty his son had been murdered. Mr. Doherty has installed a memorial to his son at Brad Hawes Park. He likened this to the AIDS epidemic and reported that the town and country is thirty years behind. 62,000 people died last year as a result of drug related deaths. The key is education and starts with the elementary and middle schools. Something needs to be done to protect the next generation. These are productive kids who have fallen to drugs. Mr. Kerwin does not want to see another family go through this

and attempt to find help that isn't there. The drugs are corrupting their brains; they are sick, not bad people. They have to support them and they want to work with the town; there are dedicated people in this town and throughout the country who are willing to do battle against the opioid epidemic.

Another member of the group, an "Angel Mom", told the story of her daughter Kathleen's battle and loss to a fentanyl overdose. Kathleen lived in an abusive situation for a short time in Weymouth, and her mother commended the assistance the Weymouth Police provided at the time. Her daughter died of an overdose at her home in Hanson. She asked the purpose of the subcommittee and why it was formed. She noted the resources were not there when her daughter struggled. Their kids are gone, but they do not want their grandchildren following. There needs to be education so it doesn't continue to happen.

Chairman Lacey commended the candor, the work they would like to do to help others avoid their situation, and offered his condolences. President O'Connor formed the committee because of the epidemic that was going on and continues. He tied mental health to it because they often go hand-in-hand, and often collide. The committee works closely with the administration, and the Fire Department response team. Their role is to inquire, investigate, advocate and support and promote the efforts of the administration and community. If there are ways the committee can help, they are willing and in position to be a public voice for them. While they do support the fire and police, they are there for the people who need their support.

Councilor Conlon told of a relative who became involved in drugs and turned to crime. He was then incarcerated, where there were more drugs available. He reported of the item in the Boston Globe that reported on the situation. One positive thing that came out of it was that SS Hospital has an intervention team that has a 60% success rate getting into a program. The solution to the problem is two pronged- education and rehabilitation. He believes money needs to fund facilities, and well-trained counselors to produce a success rate. This is the wealthiest country in the world and they can afford to fund it.

Mr. Doherty noted that people in the group met with the head of the DEA in Washington. They are hopeful that funds will come forward. They were in the State House last week. They are not asking for anything but support to prevent the death of another child.

Ms. Henderson noted that family members of victims are the best resource- they have been to the detox facilities, the hospitals. They have all suffered in every aspect of the problem and they have insight. They know where the roadblocks are. Who decides where the money is going? It is not getting where it is needed. Do they create more sober or recovery homes? The neighbors don't want these. The facility her son was at on the base was a not very nice-not that they need to have lush facilities. The Angel Mom noted that the sober houses should be regulated better.

Councilor Lacey explained the difference between the registered and unregistered homes. The Council sent a letter to the state requesting the regulations be tightened. Currently the

building department has oversight of these homes, and basically they are monitoring occupancy ordinances. Ms. Henderson told of her issue trying to get her son into a facility (nursing home) because he wasn't able to walk and didn't qualify for other programs, and he did not get the treatment he was supposed to. Chairman Lacey noted it could be a department by itself. He considers drug dealers who provide fentanyl to be murderers. They briefly discussed "Stephen's Law" and the role of the drug companies, which bear a big part of the responsibility.

Councilor McDonald reported that he also lost a brother to drugs. Drug dealers should be charged as murderers, drug companies should be paying for the treatment of those who become addicted. When he was younger the heroin problem was an inner city problem that didn't touch the suburbs. The state of New Hampshire now has the highest per capita death and overdose rates. The stigma needs to go; neighbors don't want these homes in their neighborhoods. It's problematic to the families; it stresses them out. They do need to have a more organized response. They hope to take what these folks bring forward to advocate for a better response. He looks forward to working with them.

Vice Chairman Molisse thanked them for coming forward. He also had a family member who could not receive the help they needed. The system is needs work as it is a battle to get help and if you don't have money, you can't get it.

Chairman Lacey noted that the Superintendent will send a representative to the next meeting and will update on the school's approach to the problem.

Paul Williams of the Health Department noted that the academic way of looking at it is a disservice to the families living it. This job is personal. He reviewed his history. This is affecting his generation. Great work has been done, and there is great potential to do more and to show other towns how it is done. It starts with talking about it. He appreciated the frankness of the stories. Many in public office don't want to talk about a family member's struggle. This community has come forward. What are they doing? They are outmanned, resources are slim from state and federal levels. Weymouth deserves props for some of its innovations. Weymouth is one of the few communities that the Mayor and Council called out the state to tighten the restrictions on sober homes. If it is going to be called a medical facility, then it should be regulated as one. The schools will begin a screening program in the fall, and standardizing a flowchart for referrals. It is a universal screening and is a state initiative. The health department will work on primary function- preventing first use. They need to shore up the process when someone is identified and struggling. He noted that a Fallon representative is present this evening. There is contact made at the point of overdose, but they need to offer resources at the scene so families know what help is available. Data collection is also being done so that the state and country have clear data; there is currently a disconnect.

Councilor Lacey noted that he is excited about school and how it is operationalized as the key part of proactive strategy in the schools.

Greg Davis, Fallon Ambulance, noted that he works with their mobile integrated health and community initiatives. They have been working with Paul and the FAPs (Fire, Ambulance, Police) and are one of three in the state to offer alternatives. Working with – initiatives- one of 3 EMS services in the state to offer alternative pain medication in place of narcotics. Most of the work needs to be proactive; handing the family resource materials at the time of overdose. There are a lot of things going on but a lot that isn't. He noted they are proud to be a partner. They have a stigma campaign with their employees, and the hospital and would like to bring it forward to the Awareness night. There is a stigma; they have seen it with their own employees.

Chairman Lacey is truly encouraged to see public and private partnerships; they are a great benefit when they are done well and he commended Fallon. Not all privately owned companies are willing to step up.

Councilor McDonald brought up the issue of Narcan and how to address the stigma that surrounds it. The lack of understanding and compassion of the American people today is astonishing and that needs to change. People who are addicted don't want to be.

Mr. Davis responded that many don't understand the disease of addiction and the misconception of Narcan. This drug takes someone directly from off a high to withdrawal in a matter of seconds or minutes. What does that feel like if you're abusing?

Mr. Williams reported that there is a lot of misconceptions around the use of Narcan and what it does and what it is for. There is a need for education and a need to be talking about these issues in Weymouth. One way to do it could be to model what Braintree has done; hang signs in Braintree Town Hall that everyone signed. It's a great way to start a conversation, and is easily and quickly replicated.

Mr. Williams continued and noted that drugs are getting more powerful. Parents are scared and don't know what to do. It's a person's life, and no one has the right to make that judgment call. It's education, information and leadership. Holbrook has Holbrook Cares drop-in and they are dedicated to give out the information, but people aren't coming in. Weymouth had events at WHS that were sparsely attended. It becomes frustrating and demoralizing to plan and it takes away from the motivation. The vigil is going to be a great opportunity to expand to a wider audience and it will take a commitment to spreading the word. One of the members, Darlene, is a Weymouth resident and is doing old-school community organizing and talent coordination. This is what it will take to save lives. They should also consider a follow up to the vigil; it will be key to a recommitment. September is recovery month, so there is an opportunity to do this.

Chairman Lacey reported that they have the committee's full support. He will provide an update to the Council at the August 10, 2017 meeting and ask for commentary and their support.

Mr. Williams also reported that a roundtable discussion will be held at the NE Wildlife Center 7/27/17 seeking community input- what is the issue and how can you help? Councilor Haugh advertised it on Twitter. Norfolk County has great resources that they will bring to the community.

Councilor McDonald suggested involving the churches, the Youth Group at OSU and other such organizations. He suggested a monthly update.

Ms. Henderson reported that there is a power point presentation that explains the effects of drug use on the brain and serotonin levels in an easy to understand manner and they should look into obtaining it.

Councilor Conlon pointed out that the previous mayor was the only Mayor to publicly declare that the town had a drug problem.

Chairman Lacey noted he would like to see Weymouth get ahead of the curve in addressing it. He asked the participants to consider the community and the Council as partners.

Chairman Lacey asked for flyers to advertise the vigil so it can be put on the website.

#### ADJOURNMENT

At 6:20 PM, there being no further business, a MOTION was made by Councilor McDonald to adjourn and was seconded by Councilor Molisse. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary

Approved by Councilor Thomas J. Lacey as Chairman of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Committee

Approved by unanimous vote on 5 September 2017