

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF CRAVEN COUNTY MET IN SPECIAL SESSION ON THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 2023 AT 5:00 PM IN THE BOARD ROOM AT THE RIVERFRONT CONVENTION CENTER, 203 S FRONT STREET, NEW BERN, NORTH CAROLINA. THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO DISCUSS THE OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUND.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairman Jason R. Jones
Vice-Chairman Denny Bucher
Commissioner Chadwick Howard
Commissioner Sherry Hunt
Commissioner Thomas F. Mark
Commissioner Beatrice R. Smith

STAFF PRESENT:

Jack B. Veit, III, County Manager
Lauren Wargo, Assistant to the County Manager
Amber Parker, Human Resources Director
Nan Holton, Clerk to the Board

At 5:00 pm, Chairman Jones called the Special Meeting to order and welcomed the gathered community leaders. He commented on the opioid epidemic and how most families have been affected by it; and stated this meeting is an opportunity to hear about plans going forward with funding coming to Craven County.

Tyler Harris, Recovery Alliance Initiative (RAI) community volunteer, highlighted RAI's mission to support organizations from all sectors working collectively for opioid prevention, care, and recovery. Mr. Harris reviewed data about the opioid epidemic in NC and Craven County:

- 398 suspected overdose deaths in May 2023 across NC
- Overdose ED visits in Craven County during past 12 months = 178
- EMS suspected opioid overdose encounters in Craven County during past 12 months; this is the third highest in the state

Mr. Harris indicated the data shows the trends and where we are. He remarked we cannot arrest our way out of this situation, but we have to work collaboratively to find solutions.

Craven County Human Resources Director, Amber Parker, provided the overview of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). She reported Craven County's Opioid Task Force is now the CC Opioid Epidemic Response and that through nationwide agreements with opioid manufacturers and distributors, \$47 billion has been secured to help communities harmed by the opioid epidemic. Of the \$47 billion, \$1.4 billion is to go to North Carolina over the next 18 years, which will be divided between 100 counties, and 17 municipalities.

The MOA between the state and local government units:

- Directs how opioid settlement funds are distributed
- Governs use and reporting of all opioid settlement funds
- Applies to all opioid settlement and bankruptcy funds

Ms. Parker reported Craven County will receive \$15,557,609 from 2022-2038, and she showed a graph to illustrate the opioid settlement payment schedule. She outlined the five broad requirements of the MOA:

1. Establish a special revenue fund
2. Authorize spending ahead of time in a budget or resolution
3. Understand and follow Option A or B remediation activities
4. Follow all reporting requirements
5. Annual meeting inviting municipalities to provide input.

The MOA will be effective until one year after the last opioid settlement funds are spent.

Craven County Outreach Coordinator, Jasmine Canady, presented information about the two options and their related strategies. Ms. Canady outlined Option A's high impact opioid strategies and provided explanations for each as follows:

1. Strategic planning
2. Evidence-based addiction treatment
3. Recovery support services
4. Recovery housing support
5. Employment-related services
6. Early intervention
7. Naloxone Distribution
8. Post-overdose response team
9. Syringe service program
10. Criminal justice diversion programs
11. Addiction treatment for incarcerated persons
12. Re-entry programs

Ms. Canady then outlined Options B's opioid remediation activities divided between treatment, prevention, and other strategies, which she remarked is searching for more innovative ways to treat. Each topic is described as follows:

Treatment activities:

- Treat opioid use disorder
- Support people in treatment and recovery
- Connect people who need help to the help they need
- Address the needs of criminal justice involved persons
- Address the needs of pregnant or parenting women and their families, including babies with neonatal abstinence syndromes

Prevention activities:

- Prevent over-prescribing and ensure appropriate prescribing and dispensing of opioids
- Prevent misuse of opioids
- Prevent overdose deaths and other harms

Other Strategies:

- First responders
- Leadership, planning and coordination
- Training
- Research

At this time there were questions about tracking the success of current programs and the individuals who experience success.

Ms. Canady reviewed current opioid remediation strategies being utilized in Craven County. She was hired in 2019 as the Opioid Task Coordinator to provide community outreach and prevention efforts. Since that time, a Jail Navigator position has also been created. In addition, the following events and collaborations have occurred:

- Narcan/naloxone distribution
- Establishment of Realize U252 sober living house
- RAI community collaborative participation
- Establishment of Dix Crisis Center
- Treatment and recovery related transportation provided by CARTS
- Additional Narcotics Investigator positions created
- Funding and support of K-9 and DARE programs
- Funding and support of Hope Mission Ministries

County Manager, Jack Veit, addressed the group and stated the floor was open to receive input from the municipalities as to the proposed uses of the opioid settlement funds. He reported the Social Services monthly report highlighted nine babies born with drugs in their system last month and emphasized the success of a child's life is reduced at birth when this occurs.

City of New Bern Alderman, Bob Brinson, indicated he had ideas but needed time to talk to others about them first and asked what the city could do to help.

Mr. Brinson inquired about the test strips for fentanyl and the benefit of having those available to all EMS and First Responders.

City of New Bern Assistant Manager, Marvin Williams, expressed interest in the ability to partner and receive funding for Narcan distribution and commented on the first responders and mental health components.

City of Havelock Police Tom Dorn and Chris Morning also requested Narcan funding and the potential for some of the funds to help with their National Night Out program. They expressed full support as they concurred you cannot arrest your way out of this epidemic. They commended Jasmine on her outreach.

Citizen Veronica Canady highlighted the need for counseling for families affected by addiction. Jasmine Canady reported on existing support groups available like AAA, Narcotics Anonymous and Celebrate Recovery and the hope for more options in the future.

Commissioner Hunt inquired about youth mental health first aid which Jasmine explained the Peer Support Specialist training she received and its' purpose. Mrs. Hunt stated a need for DARE programs to be implemented in each of the middle and high schools. Mr. Veit indicated implementation of this requires the schools' initiation. Commissioner Jones added the ABC Board has appropriated additional funding to put DARE in middle schools. Mrs. Hunt requested more information about the syringe replacement program and if it is available at the Health Department.

Commissioner Howard spoke in support of expanding the DARE program and reported on the receipt of a grant last year to put the DARE program in a middle school.

Commissioner Smith inquired about how the drugs are coming into Craven County and how that is being addressed. Mr. Veit stated Sheriff Hughes indicated there is a national narrative about where it is coming in and their use of undercover narcotic investigators and K-9 units to address it.

Tyler Harris informed the group that RAI is putting together a comprehensive directory of resources available in the county and the state, as a point of reference as to where to begin to seek help.

Commissioner Jones thanked everyone in attendance on behalf of the Board of Commissioners. He emphasized the need for people to continue to share their ideas.

Mr. Veit remarked this would be an annual event, but to please call at any time with input. He reported Option A is the format Craven County will follow and requested all the information be shared with others in their organizations.

At the conclusion of the meeting, it was recognized that no action was taken by the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Howard motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:50 pm and his motion was seconded by Commissioner Bucher and unanimously approved.

Chairman Jason R. Jones
Craven County Board of Commissioners

Nan Holton
Clerk to the Board