Committee Members Present: J. Hopkins (Chairman), L. Ballengee, M. Biddle, A. Bucholz, J. Chaffee, M. Chamberlain, M. Damiano, L. Haggstrom, K. LaForge, K. Monroe, G. Muscato, W. Penman, T. O’Grady, B. Riehle, R. Root, C. Zenoski (Absent: M. Carbone, V. Grant, C. Ivers)


Media Present: C. Dutton, Cuba Patriot, B. Quinn, Wellsville Daily Reporter

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by Committee Chairman Judy Hopkins.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Ms. Ballengee, seconded by Undersheriff Monroe, and carried to approve the Allegany County Heroin & Opioid Abuse Ad Hoc Committee minutes of January 12, 2017.

Welcome/Introduction:

Chairman Hopkins welcomed committee members and guests. Chairman Hopkins stated there are a lot of guests at the meeting, and asked that everyone in attendance introduce themselves. Chairman Hopkins stated they would like to hold a special meeting to show the “Hungry Heart” movie in the Legislative Chambers on Thursday, February 16, 2017, at 1:00 p.m. The committee also hopes to show the movie in the northern and southern regions of the County. Fillmore Superintendent Ravo Root offered the Fillmore Central School Auditorium for the northern County viewing and Pastor Marc Chamberlain confirmed that Genesis Bible church could also be used.

Resolution Intro. No. 30-17

Chairman Hopkins shared with the committee Resolution Intro. No. 30-17 that was presented at the NYSAC Conference, stating it calls on the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services and the Governor of the State of New York to provide state funding to support the treatment of individuals with substance use disorders who are incarcerated in county jails, in order to help combat the heroin and opioid abuse epidemic and other addictions, save lives, and reduce the rate of recidivism. Chairman Hopkins added that currently any treatment that is happening at the jails would have to be paid for by the respective county, so they are asking for the state to take this cost on. Undersheriff Monroe stated he hopes the Resolution goes through. Leslie Haggstrom added as a taxpayer she also hopes it passes. A motion was made by Legislator LaForge, seconded by Ms. Bucholz, and carried to endorse this resolution on behalf of
the Allegany County Heroin & Opioid Abuse Ad Hoc Committee. **Prepare**

**Endorsement for Resolution Intro. No. 30-17**

**Local County Task Force Meetings**

Chairman Hopkins stated she recently had the opportunity to talk with Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz who has been hosting local county task force meetings around the state. Chairman Hopkins added she asked when the meeting in Western New York will take place, and while it hasn't been scheduled yet, Chairman Hopkins offered Allegany County to host it.

**Ardent Solutions Report**

A motion was made by Ravo Root, seconded by Melissa Biddle, and carried to adopt the Ardent Solutions report as the committee’s plan of work. **Prepare**

**Acceptance of Ardent Solutions Report**

**Vision/Mission Statements**

Chairman Hopkins asked Helen Evans (Associate Director, Ardent Solutions) to lead the committee in the process of developing vision/mission statements. Ms. Evans began by reading the following proposed statements to the committee:

**Mission Statement:** “The Allegany County Heroin and Opioid Abuse Advisory Ad Hoc Committee is an appointed legislative body that strives to influence, support, and secure resources for communities, organizations, and individuals impacted by addiction. Our purpose is to ensure that appropriate prevention, treatment, and recovery assets are available to all Allegany County residents while advancing policy and enforcement efforts at the local, state, and federal level.” A motion was made by Ms. Ballengee, seconded by Ms. Haggstrom, and carried to approve the mission statement.

**Vision Statement:** “Collaboratively working together to create a safe and healthy Allegany County through drug-free living.” Ms. Evans stated there was a 92.31 percent agreement rate and a disagreement rate of 7.69 percent. Ms. Evans added the only comment received back was whether or not the word “alcohol” should be included in the vision statement so people didn’t think it was precluding that type of abuse. Mr. Chamberlain stated that alcohol abuse is still our greatest at-risk factor that is causing pain and suffering, and he advocates for adding the word “alcohol” to the vision statement. The committee discussed the pros and cons to adding “alcohol” to the vision statement. William Pennman stated not including the word “alcohol” puts you in the position where someone reads it and just sees a reference to drugs and thinks it doesn’t apply to them. Michael Damiano stated from a devil’s advocate position he is concerned that we may be setting up some unintended consequences because there are drugs that people do and should take. Ashley Bucholz suggested the vision statement reads “collaboratively working together to create a safe and healthy Allegany County through alcohol and drug or substance abuse” adding it’s then not taking away the medications that people genuinely do need, but addressing the abuse of them that is causing the unhealthy and unsafe part for the County. Ms. Haggstrom stated it’s a question of which
word is more preferred; substance or drug. Mr. Penman stated substance is broader
based, adding that someone could abuse any kind of substance. Mr. Penman went on
to say a lot of campaigns are moving towards a more generalized substance abuse so
as not to point out a specific community of abuse, adding that using the word
“substance” also covers anything new that may come out. It was suggested by the
committee to then remove the word “alcohol” altogether. Mr. Penman stated he prefers
that the word “alcohol” stays because a general person in the community hears the
phrase substance abuse they automatically think of drugs, not alcohol. Mr. Penman
went on to say the committee is getting caught up in the semantics; the vision statement
is supposed to be broad based, and the details being discussed fall under their goals
and objectives. Melissa Biddle (Ardent Solutions) added from the perspective of a group
trying to apply for funding to support their efforts; keeping the vision statement broad will
allow them the diversity to apply for different funding. A motion was made by Chairman
Hopkins, seconded by Mr. Penman, and carried to change the vision statement to read
“collaboratively working together to create a safe and healthy Allegany County through
alcohol and substance abuse/addiction free living.”

**Heroin and Opioid Ad-Hoc Committee Survey**

Helen Evans (Ardent Solutions) discussed with the committee the results of the
Heroin and Opioid Ad-Hoc Committee survey. Ms. Evans thanked everyone who
completed the survey, stating it has given them momentum in moving forward, and
direction as far as how they will be established in the infrastructure and working
together in the four committees that were identified. It was decided that the committee
would remain a legislative ad-hoc committee under the structure of the Board of
Legislators, adding that this will give them the opportunity to have greater strength and
greater support from the County Legislature when it comes to things like funding,
avocacy and moving forward with plans. Ms. Evans stated she wanted the committee
to think about what it means to be a part of this group. What is the purpose of the
committee, and what are their roles and responsibilities. Ms. Evans went on to say that
the Ardent Solutions' report states they will be an advocacy for change and listed off the
following roles the committee will be responsible for:

**Collaboration:**

- Prioritizing issues
- Gap analyses
- Mentoring
- Leveraging resources
- Identifying best practices
- Developing solutions
- Stakeholder engagement
- Maximizing expertise

**Capacity Building:**

- Community engagement
- Research
• Strategic planning
• Shared learning and expertise
• Coordination of resources
• Public policy
• Systematic change

Policy:
• Education/awareness forums
• Action alerts
• Media
• Issue papers
• Policy briefs
• Engagement with elected officials and decision makers
• Advocacy training
• Representation at local and state levels

Ms. Evans stated she would like to have a discussion with the committee if this is the direction they feel their efforts should be and why. Leslie Haggstrom stated the outline is amazing, and she is particularly interested in community engagement and policy, but thinks they need to be careful not to duplicate resources and work that is being done by organizations that have more education, time, money, and professional expertise than we do. Ms. Haggstrom stated it seems that our biggest goal is to focus on how this impacts our local piece of society. Ms. Haggstrom went on to say they need to focus on who we are, what we need, what we have and don’t have because that information is essential in being passed along to those who are doing the bigger work because they may be overlooking the smaller rural counties and our problems with transportation, education, as well as cross cultural needs. Ms. Evans continued discussing the survey results and listed the following top rated priorities:

Prevention Priorities

• Promote community awareness of heroin and opioid abuse as public health issue.
• Promote community education about resources for individual impacted heroin and opioid abuse.
• Advocate, monitor, and support community resources for families and loved-ones impacted by heroin and opioid abuse.
• Advocate for the detection and assessment of opioid and heroin abuse/misuse by healthcare professionals, through standardized screening.
• Support organizations providing evidence-based educational programs sited through the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services.
• Advocate, monitor, and support addiction prevention campaigns, i.e. kitchen table toolkit, parent toolkit, and text2talk parent toolkit.
Treatment Priorities

- Advocate, monitor, and support local inpatient residential services.
- Advocate, monitor, and support local inpatient detoxification services.
- Advocate for simultaneous treatment of co-occurring disorders for individuals living with more than one diagnosis; physical, mental and/or substance abuse disorder.
- Advocate, monitor, and support workforce development strategies to increase local addictions and behavioral disorder professionals.
- Advocate for improved continuity of care between healthcare systems through improved communication strategies within the confines of HIPAA.
- Advocate, monitor, and support healthcare professionals to become certified physician medication-assisted Opioid Treatment Program providers.

Recovery Priorities

- Support individuals living in recovery by advocating for greater local crisis intervention services.
- Support individuals living in recovery by advocating for greater local Housing Assistance Programs.
- Support organizations and/or self-help groups who promote recovery efforts.
- Support individuals living in recovery by advocating for greater local job readiness services.
- Support individuals living in recovery by advocating for greater local Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs.
- Support organizations and/or self-help groups who promote recovery efforts.

Enforcement Priorities

- Advocate for improved monitoring of prescription medications through the NYSDOH I-STOP system.
- Advocate and support the re-implementation of Resource Officers in local school districts.
- Advocate and support law enforcement agencies in their efforts to eliminate production, sales, and distribution of illegal narcotics.
- Advocate, monitor, and support improved mandatory drug testing procedures for those on probation.
- Promote and support the Partners for Prevention in Allegany County’s (PPAC) Permanent Pill Drop locations.
Guest Speaker, Kyle Leslie

Chairman Hopkins introduced Kyle Leslie to the group. Mr. Leslie attended the meeting to share his recovery from alcohol and substance abuse. Mr. Leslie thanked the committee for allowing him to attend and share his story. Mr. Leslie indicated that he started off fairly young just using marijuana, and after taking that to the extreme and getting in trouble at high school, he was court mandated to the Renaissance House in West Seneca, NY, for 8 months. Mr. Leslie stated that after he got out of the Renaissance House, he took his addiction further and experimented with other drugs such as heroin and cocaine, adding he’s been through them all. After seeing the pain he was putting his family through, he decided to quit drugs and pick up alcohol, because in his mind it was legal. Mr. Leslie went on to say he currently has 3 DWIs, as well as other charges, is on probation, and recently lost a close friend. These events inspired him to do something about his addiction, and anything he can do to help this movement he is willing to do. Undersheriff Monroe asked Mr. Leslie how old he is and what age he began abusing drugs. Mr. Leslie stated he is 25 years old, and was 16 years old when he first began using drugs, adding he turned 18 years old while in rehab. Undersheriff Monroe then asked Mr. Leslie what his recovery plans are and whether or not he will be utilizing any of the services the County has to offer. Mr. Leslie stated the only recovery plan that he trusts in is God. He can’t speak for anyone else, but he has tried different services and outreach programs, but all he can really do is trust in God to get him through this. Christa Zenoski asked when he decided to turn to alcohol abuse, was there a service that failed him in his recovery process that put him in a state to abuse alcohol. Mr. Leslie stated that his biggest frustration while in rehab was the few counselors that have never picked up a cigarette, let alone abused a drug, and never being an addict or having sat in similar shoes, they don’t understand the feeling. Mr. Leslie went on to say a few days after leaving rehab he did well, but after getting back into old habits and around old friends, and thinking you’re strong enough, he realized that once you’re an addict you’re always an addict, adding there is no such thing as a recovered addict. You’re always going to be recovering from addiction. Ashley Bucholz congratulated Mr. Leslie on his recovery efforts and stated there are some great benefits in some of the programs and services provided, but when you have a group mandated to these rehab centers, and they are all put into one room, all you’re doing is getting access to new suppliers and contacts. Ms. Bucholz went on to say she was put into a group with 19 other addicts and if it were more individualized, you might have a better opportunity for success, adding she feels that is where the system failed her. Mr. Leslie added that putting a bunch of addicts into one group and listening to everyone talk about their story is like pouring gas on a fire. Greg Muscato congratulated Mr. Leslie on sharing his story and stated there are a lot of members that don’t know what it’s like to be in his shoes and Mr. Leslie’s story and information helps us band together and help him as well as others. Mr. Muscato then asked after spending 8 months at the Renaissance House, what positive and negative experiences Mr. Leslie had. Mr. Leslie stated he equally experienced both, adding if it were more individualized, there may have been more positive experiences, but when you’re cooped up in a house of 25 addicts, and you’re not allowed to leave, it’s hard to focus on the positives. Mr. Muscato then asked if Mr. Leslie’s close friend was lost to due death or disowning. Mr. Leslie
stated it was due to death. His friend has just gotten out of rehab and was prescribed Vivitrol, and while taking his prescription, he had a relapse, and became brain dead. Mr. Leslie went on to say he has done some research on the drug Vivitrol and found that if you relapse while on this prescription, it will destroy your brain stem. With the percentage rate of relapses so high, he doesn’t agree with putting someone on this prescription knowing that it could ultimately kill you if you relapse. Mr. Leslie continued that he feels all anti-opiate drugs should be banned for that reason, because it’s not giving people a chance. What keeps recovering addicts clean is disassociating with old habits, old friends, and old places. Leslie Haggstrom asked if Mr. Leslie has looked into any 12-Step programs, and if he finds them useful. Mr. Leslie stated he can’t speak for everyone, and they are a good resource and will benefit many, but a program like that is insufficient in his recovery as he can fall on the wild side of things. Marc Chamberlain asked how he feels about having a recovering coach or sponsor. Mr. Leslie stated it would depend on who the person is, adding there are some good people out there, but there are also some that aren’t true to their intentions, and that can lead to your own destruction. Mr. Leslie went on to say all addicts think alike, and he personally feels that putting two addicts together may be helpful, but more than likely will lead to tearing each other down. Ravo Root thanked Mr. Leslie for sharing his story and stated that most schools have prevention and education and what was his takeaway from his high school experience with them. Mr. Leslie stated he went to Portville High School, and their education was intertwined with Health Class. He didn’t get much from it as it was in high school when he first began abusing. Mr. Leslie went on to say to really put an effect on the drug issue, you have to cut it at the source where the drugs and/or prescriptions are coming from, which is hard to do, but he has seen a lot of good kids get put on a prescription pain killer, and end up a drug addict. Lori Ballengee applauded Mr. Leslie for his courage and asked when he came to the realization that he was causing his family so much pain, was there a defining moment that brought him to that realization; was there an intervention or incident that occurred. Mr. Leslie stated it was unconditional love, adding if you can have somebody to love you and make you feel like you actually matter; that is the greatest motivator of all, and it is what helped him. Chairman Hopkins stated that feeling like you matter is a key thing in a person’s life, adding that if you feel like you mean nothing, then it doesn’t matter whether or not you destroy yourself. Chairman Hopkins congratulated Mr. Leslie and stated he and his life do matter.
Next Meeting:

Allegany County Heroin & Opioid Abuse Ad Hoc Committee Meeting – Thursday, March 9, 2017, at 1:00 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m. following a motion by Legislator LaForge, seconded by Undersheriff Monroe, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Meghan Washer, Secretary to Clerk of the Board
Allegany County Board of Legislators