

**Town of Barnstable
Human Services Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 12, 2013**

Names in bold indicate action items.

Present:

Scott Fitzgerald, Chair, Charles Hetzel and Heidi Nelson, (members), and Jen Cullum, Town Council Liaison to the committee

Guests:

KC Myers and Linda Corcoran, Cape Cod Times

Absent:

Bill Doherty, Roy Richardson, Mark Thomas, Paul Thompson

Approve Meeting Minutes from October 8, 2013:

The minutes of the October 8, 2013 meeting were reviewed but not approved. We will approve them at the December committee meeting.

Guest Speaker- KC Myers

KC Myers attended the meeting as the first in a series of guest speakers invited by the committee to inform us about the problem of addiction in the town of Barnstable and on the Cape. KC began to research the issue of drug addiction, in particular addiction to pain medication, in 2008. She met families affected, and followed the life journey of one young man for a two-year period. She interviewed law enforcement, and learned from a Yarmouth police officer that drug addiction is an epidemic on Cape Cod and was directly related to property crime. At the time, Oxycodone was the main problem, and Cape Cod was above the state average for overdose deaths.

In 2013, she returned to the issue, and found that the drug of choice is now heroine, because it has the same effects but is much cheaper than prescription pain medication. Some of the resulting health problems include an increase of babies born affected (43 in 2011 to 62 in 2012 at Cape Cod Hospital alone), and an increase in Hepatitis C cases (27 cases confirmed among 15 to 25 year olds for a rate of 137/100,000).

There is some promise for better access to treatment through the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, and recent rules promulgated by the federal government as a result of federal parity legislation passed a few years ago. However, it is widely believed that we do not have enough treatment beds available for Cape Codders. Judge Julian, of the Barnstable County courts, has 40 participants in the Drug Court, but has stated that it is hard to sentence offenders to treatment when there are not enough beds available.

KC highlighted the Learn to Cope program operated by Gosnold, which promotes discussion between parents and their children about drug use. She also recommended a documentary entitled 'Anonymous People;' her view is that the focus on anonymity in recovery leads to a lack of public discussion about the problem.

KC's recommendations to the Committee and the Town:

- 1) Drug abuse is a serious problem that needs to be discussed out in the open. Public awareness is needed. If everyone who had addiction in their family showed up to talk about it, it would change everything.
- 2) The critical point of intervention is with young people, in the schools.
- 3) There need to be more treatment programs on the Cape for young people and more residential treatment in general.
- 4) We need to promote alternatives to incarceration through the courts.
- 5) We need to be able to monitor the prescribing practices of physicians that over prescribe pain medication. She added that she believes oxycodone should be illegal.
- 6) There should be greater access to Vivitrol and Suboxone, especially for teens.
- 7) We should watch the effects of expanded coverage for mental health and substance abuse due to increased parity between behavioral health and medical insurance programs. Will treatment outcomes improve with increased availability of treatment and better reimbursement?
- 8) Substance abuse outpatient services are effective in integrated settings because it destigmatizes those who seek treatment.

KC plans to continue covering this topic and will be looking at dual diagnosis programs for youth, and the work of this committee.

Future Agenda Items

December 10, Chief MacDonald, Barnstable Police Department

January 14, Mary Czajkowski, Superintendent of Schools

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Heidi Romans Nelson