

Health & Welfare
Committee Minutes
April 4, 2011

Members present: Jo Ann Blankenship, Paul Mottern, Russell Kyte, Richard Winters, Robert Gobble, Ken Arney, Ronnie Trivett and L. C. Tester.

Others present: Leon Humphrey, Chris Mathes, Angie Odom, Captain Tom Smith Robin Schafer and other concerned citizens.

Jo Ann Blankenship, Chairwoman opened the meeting and welcomed all present. Motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting was made by Ronnie Trivett, second by Robert Gobble. Motion carried.

Unfinished Business

Meth Lab Awareness Workshop- Captain Tom Smith is scheduled to give a presentation to inform the general public and answer questions. The Workshop will be held April 21, 2011 from 6:00-9:00pm in the courtroom of the Carter County Courthouse. The Health Department will also be giving a presentation on how the meth issue relates in schools and homes.

Mayor Humphrey stated that we have several issues in the county with meth labs and the County Commission needs to be brought up to speed as soon as possible. We have two sites we need to look at funding clean up, one in the Hunter Community and another in Hampton. All Commissioners are encouraged to attend because this is an issue they will have to deal with.

Motion to have the workshop April 21, 2011 at 6:00pm at the Carter County Courthouse was made by Ronnie Trivett, second by Robert Gobble. Motion carried.

Renovations will begin this month at the Carter County Health Department. Estimates are being acquired for the flooring. Termite problems exist in the Truman Clark Annex on the interior walls and will require treatment. Caroline Hurt ask Ms. Blankenship to relate to the committee she will receive assistance from the Roan Mountain inmates in making the repairs at the facility.

New Business

Ms. Robin Schafer, Director of Crossroads spoke to the group regarding the general description of what the program does. Crossroads is a non-profit agency and has operated for the past 30 years. Juveniles and adults take part in the agency's programs and those individuals are referred from the court systems, Department of Human Services and the Department of Children's Services. Services offered include Counseling, Referral to Treatment, Educational Programs including Teacher Training, Adult Services, DUI Schools, and other assistance. Ms. Schafer answered questions from the group during the session related to staffing, hours of operation and requirements from the court system for the individuals to attend. Fees are charged for services rendered. Outpatient services only, no inpatient services are available. The Board of Directors meets every other month. The success rate for minor individuals is not known at this time.

The program averages anywhere from 900 to 1,100 visits per month for probation violation. There are more people who come off of probation than those who violate. The newspaper only shows the ones who violate but you do not see the ones who come off of probation; most are not repeat offenders. Ms. Schafer promised to gather information for the last year statistics relating to the number of probation violations for the committee. Mr. L. C. Tester asked the question "Why does the County not receive any of the money that is collected since we arrest them, feed them, house them and pay for their medical bills and get nothing?" Ms. Schafer stated "The County was getting \$3 per probation fees that were charged up until about a year ago." She stated that she tried to communicate this to the County Commission a few years ago. Crossroads was actually doing all the violation paperwork and filing the violations and your revenue was coming in that the people owed to the County. They continued to get friction from the Carter County Clerk's Office stating they had so much work to do and it was too much trouble and so forth and so on. They were able to convince the judge to allow them to take their fees and take the program out of the unit. She said she had no problem working with the County but there is

a lot of situations that need to be resolved. A request was made by the Commissioners to receive a list of the programs available and the hours of operation to include in the monthly packets. Current fees are \$35 monthly for probation violation which is in line with the Department of Corrections, plus the drug screening which is usually \$10 for nine types of narcotics testing. Presently there is an increase of cocaine and meth use in our area Counties.

Ms. Angie Odom spoke to the committee regarding the drug suboxone. Ms. Odom is the Director of the Abortion Alternatives and Women's Center in Carter County. Ms. Odom stated that since the County Commission meeting she has had six doctors call her and try to tell her it is an ok drug and that it cannot be abused and people can't get high off of suboxone. Ms. Odom spent a day visiting and speaking with the Physicians and one Doctor did tell her that the drug equaled a Loratab 10, (used to relieve moderate to severe pain). If an individual is taking suboxone for treatment they take many pills a day if they are taking it properly. Why are we putting more drugs in their hands when they say they have a drug problem? Very few of the Doctor's Offices take Insurance when prescribing suboxone; they prescribe it on a cash basis. Tenn Care does cover suboxone at drug treatment centers when individuals are required by the court system. While at the treatment center Tenn Care will pay for suboxone but not for counseling. Ms. Odom informed the committee we already have 3-4 suppliers in our town that give out suboxone as they feel necessary for drug treatment. She said people can go on the internet and find out where to buy it; they target the location of the suppliers. She declared she would rather they know us as a town who doesn't stand for it and that we believe change is possible in their lives and offer support of treatment and healing. Ms. Odom also conducted surveys in the Carter County Jail and through the surveys she asked who was using what types of drugs and if they had ever been to a physician and signed up for the suboxone drug treatment plan. The survey concluded 63 percent of the inmates questioned said they had taken suboxone. They had not gone to Physicians to acquire the drug but had bought it off the streets and from other people they knew. So many people are not aware of what is going on in our county. Ms. Odom and her daughter have been going to area high schools for the past seven years to acquire surveys and make students aware of the risk of using drugs. The majority surveys showed by the age of 12 most students had experimented with drugs. Ms. Odom is working to take the problem to a **State Level** and require Physicians and Clinics to offer in-patient treatment when prescribing the drugs.

In closing Ms. Odom stated that the last Commission was her first meeting to attend and she prays that everyone is not treated as she was treated at that meeting. She also stated that unless God changes her mind she will run for County Commissioner in 2014, no disrespect, "All of you are here to serve me as a citizen!"

Clarification was made by Ms. Odom that she was speaking of an in house counseling treatment center at the County Commission Meeting last month.

Ms. Schafer offered her opinion on the present treatments "you are only substituting one drug for another and most judges do not support suboxone drug treatment plans." Sheriff Chris Mathes stated that suboxone is a newer drug that is replacing methadone. He said if the drug is taken properly Suboxone attacks the receptors in the brain.

Ms. Blankenship stated there was an active counseling service going on here in the City at one of the local churches where an average of 20 people are attending on Wednesday evenings. Trained counselors are provided to work with the people who attend the sessions. Name of Church_____??

911 Addresses

Homes are not consistently marked in the County. Sheriff Mathes said there was a legal issue (people have the right to be anonymous). If residents do not want to post their address they are not required to do so. He also stated that we should do a promotion to encourage people to post signs. Some of the area Fire Departments make reflective address signs and sale them for around \$10 each.

Motion to adjourn was made by Ronnie Trivett, second by Paul Mottern. Motion carried.

Respectively submitted,

Debbie Street