

Amherst hires outside counsel in opioid lawsuit

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A New York City-based law firm has been retained to represent the Town of Amherst in its lawsuit against major manufacturers and distributors of opioid pain medication.

The suit seeking unspecified damages is expected to be filed Tuesday in State Supreme Court accusing the companies of public nuisance, fraud, negligence and unfair business practices in the wake of the opioid epidemic.

The Town Board on Monday agreed to hire the firm Napoli Shkolnik on a contingency fee basis. Amherst Town Attorney Stanley Sliwa said the firm has "a great deal of experience in handling large-scale pharmaceutical cases" and represents about 20 municipalities in similar suits.

Police Chief John C. Askey said 14 deaths in 2016 were attributed to opioid-related overdoses in Amherst and "citizens, families and our community in general have suffered greatly as a result of this deadly epidemic."

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Image: The Amherst Town Board will join other municipalities in suing pharmaceutical companies over the opioid crisis. (News file photo)