



Lancaster Bee

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Town joins Napoli Shkolnik lawsuit

by AMY ROBB Editor

The Lancaster Town Board formally signed an agreement with Napoli Shkolnik, Attorneys at Law, to bring and sustain a lawsuit against “the manufacturers, distributors, and key opinion leaders” of opioid pain medications, according to a resolution Monday night.

Lancaster joins Erie County, Amherst and Cheektowaga locally, as well as other municipalities in the state, in charging the pharmaceutical industry with overprescribing opioid medications, leading to the public health and safety of its residents.

According to the New York City-based law office, prescriptions for opioid medications quadrupled from 1999 to 2014, despite no reported change in the level of pain experienced by Americans. Napoli Shkolnik draws from data via the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“It is something that we’re facing, and it does set a precedent for families that have problems. If we can do anything to punish the crime, maybe it kind of deters this from happening,” said Ronald Ruffino, who presented the resolution to the board.

Attorney Charles Desmond will be handling data collected in Western New York and relaying the information to Napoli Shkolnik.

“The Police Department would have to provide them with information, giving them the number of police hours devoted to dealing with the crisis,” said Supervisor Johanna Coleman.

“They would perhaps ask the courts to weigh in on court cases, how many involving opioids, how many involving the distribution of heroin with fentanyl in it. I’m sure the courts would also have some involvement.”

The law firm will not charge any fees to the town unless monetary judgment is granted in favor of the plaintiffs.

The board also approved a contract between Lancaster and the Town of Elma to maintain, add or replace, if necessary, fire hydrants along Hall Road between Bowen and Ransom roads, representing the border between the towns.

“Rather than us having to put new fire hydrants all the way down that street, they’re already on the other side of that street; we just don’t own them. All this is doing is asking Elma to allow us to use them, should we ever need to use them,” said Councilman Matt Walter.

“In exchange for that, we’ll basically pay them a small stipend to help with the upkeep on those. It’s just that one stretch of road that is a community street; we share the street.”

The resolution is a continuation on an existing agreement between Lancaster and Elma regarding Hall Road.

“What it does is saves the town a ton. If we were to have to put in all new hydrants, it would be a complete waste with hydrants literally across from each other. It’s a nice intermunicipal cooperation. I love any time that we can work with other towns,” added Walter.

The next Lancaster Town Board meeting will be at 7 p.m. Monday, May 21, at Lancaster Town Hall, 21 Central Ave. There is always a work session a half-hour prior to each meeting.

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