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Manchester aldermen vote to join possible suit against pharmaceutical companies

By PAUL FEELY

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MANCHESTER — City aldermen on Tuesday voted to authorize the city solicitor's office to work with a local law firm to partner with New York attorneys in bringing a lawsuit against pharmaceutical companies on behalf of the city in response to the ongoing opioid crisis.

Mayor Ted Gatsas said an attorney from the Manchester law firm of Nixon, Vogelman, Barry, Slawsky, and Simoneau met with Manchester Police Chief Nick Willard and City Solicitor Tom Clark about joining the possible suit. According to Gatsas, the Queen City firm is speaking with communities locally in New Hampshire about taking part in the lawsuit, which will be handled at a national level by the New York firm of Napoli Shkolnik PLLC.

"They will pay for all the expenses, and we would look to take a percentage if there are any funds paid out," said Gatsas. They are going after the pharmaceutical companies. There is no cost to the city."

According to paperwork provided by Asst. City Solicitor Tom Arnold, attorneys with Napoli Shkolnik PLLC have been investigating potential claims on behalf of individuals and communities against pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors for over a year for the "fraudulent and negligent marketing and distribution of opioid pain medications."

According to the paperwork, Napoli Shkolnik PLLC intends on pursuing claims against the largest manufacturers and marketers of opioid pain medications in the country, including: Purdue Pharmaceuticals, makers of OxyContin and Dialuadid; Teva Pharmaceutical Industries, Inc./Cephalon, Inc., makers of fentanyl products Actiq and Fentora; Johnson and Johnson/Janssen Pharmaceutical, makers of Duragesic fentanyl products; and Endo Pharmaceuticals, makes of Percocet and Opana.

Attorneys with Napoli Shkolnik PLLC intend to pursue claims for "deceptive acts and practices, false advertising, public nuisance, fraud, unjust enrichment" and other state specific violations, according to documents provided by Arnold.

Aldermen voted unanimously to authorize the solicitor's office to join the suit on behalf of the city.

pfeely@unionleader.com