

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Friday, April 9, 2010

4:00 P.M.

**1st. Fl. Council Conference Room – City Hall
Council Meeting 2010-009**

Present: Council President, Jacqueline Hardy; Councilor Paul McGeary; Councilor Steven Curcuru; Councilor Mulcahey; Councilor Robert Ciolino

Absent: Councilor Theken, Councilor Tobey; Councilor Whynott, Councilor Verga

Also Present: Councilor Ciolino, Max Schenk; Joan Whitney

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

1. Board of Health: Substance Abuse Grant

Motion to suspend the Rules of Procedure passed unanimously.

Joan Whitney, Director Substance Abuse Prevention Services for the Health Department explained in 2008 under a grant from the Attorney General's office, the City received it to look at prevention of the opiate issues that face not only Gloucester but communities around the State. Gloucester was one of 10 communities to receive those funds which were a result of the judgment against Purdue Pharma, makers of the drug Oxycontin who had mismarketed it. They convened pharmacists, law enforcement, physicians together to look at how they see the issue and what they thought should be done about it by looking at data an information available. One of the things that came out of that year-long grant is the 'Gloucester Medications Disposal Program'. The program's goals were to limit access of prescription drugs and misuse of prescription drugs and to increase awareness of the harm of misuse. It is now well founded across the country that prescription drug misuse shows 1 in 5 teens will misuse prescription drugs, the fastest growing category of drug misuse in the United States. Prevention is the best tool. The group convened to study this problem believes strongly in prevention. This program's goal is to limit access by drop-off events [there is a 24/7 disposal at the Gloucester Police Station] and to increase education and awareness, especially among teens. Young people have no idea that it's going to harm them, that just one time can harm them and have a tragic effect. Since 2008, this program has become a model to other communities in the region. It has been acknowledged by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health as a model program and has been sited to be presented at the regional meeting on May 12th to be held here at Cruiseport. In the beginning when they were looking drug disposal for keeping youth safe, there were also some reports about the environmental effects of these drugs in the water supply. At that time Ms. Whitney approached Mr. Schenk who has become a key partner in the coalition effort. The coalition, under the Healthy Gloucester Collaborative, has both a substance abuse prevention piece and also an environmental, 'let's keep our water clean and keep youth safe' components. Coalition members include: law enforcement, pharmacists, physicians, Triads, Rose Baker Senior Center, DEA (a key partner right from the beginning, specifically Nancy Coffey). It really is a wonderful success story. The Attorney General's grant ended a year ago. Since last April the program has been unfunded, but the spirit of the coalition members and the in-kind contributions has kept it going but wears thin. They have been looking hard for funding for this. This opportunity came up a week ago for 'MassCall2Communities' of which there are 15 in the State, and Gloucester is one. This is a narrow grant focused on reducing unintentional heroin overdose deaths. While the medication disposal program does not directly address that, they are now seeing that these kind of programs provide the prevention piece that is key to the community, helping stop people from getting started on misusing prescription drugs. There is a noted relationship between abuse of prescription drugs and heroin use. This is mainly because prescription drugs are very expensive; 1

mg. of Oxycontin is \$80.00. Heroin is about \$4.00 a pack. There is an environmental message as well correlating the relationship between prescription drugs and the water quality.

Max Schenk of the Health Department explained the environmental aspect noting it [Gloucester's prevention program] has been recognized by the District Attorney's office. They've decided they want to set up a regional drug disposal day using Gloucester's program as the model. There are 32 communities in the Essex County District. They'll do it in hub communities [more information will come out on this over the summer]; Gloucester being one of the main hubs. They've brought in the EPA as a partner as well, making this a broad-based coalition of federal, state and local law enforcement and regulatory agencies. It is important to understand from an environmental standpoint, if you flush these drugs down your toilet, it comes out somewhere. When you consider how many people dispose of their drugs this way, a drug disposal program is very important. Our waste water goes out to main water sources. It is not treated through the waste water process; and it doesn't break down. The only effective way to get rid of it is to burn it. The trace amounts after burning is miniscule because the base components of pills are mainly carbon. It is a much better way of handling the issue on the environmental side. They've been working without funding for the last year. The grant popped up because they saw the success of our program. The drugs go to the incinerator in Saugus. The key to all this is law enforcement. Law enforcement has to be there when you do the collection; they hold and transport the drugs and supervise their disposal. When their evidence locker gets full they then transport it to the incinerator. Chief Lane has been a very active partner in this, even before he was Chief, as a detective. There is a 24-hour drop off at our police station. Then there are the outreach programs at the Rose Baker Senior Center where a police presence is in attendance each time. As much as they've collected, there's that much more and then some still. As many people they can reach to prevent this from happening is also very important. For folks that have septic systems, many who have wells nearby; the proper disposal of prescription drugs is even more important. There was a study done by Eight Towns of the Bay. They tested the water around the Merrimack Valley region for estrogen and found it in the tap water of several communities, which is very unhealthy. It's something to raise awareness about.

Councilor Hardy asked if there was a match.

Mr. Schenk stated there are none. The application is due 5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 12th.

Councilor McGeary asked what the most misused prescription drug is.

Ms. Whitney stated in 2005 there was a report that there is a connection between prescription drug misuses leading to heroin use. There was a miscalculation of and misinformation to doctors on Oxycontin being a pain reliever for mild pain, which it's not. It's meant for terminally ill cancer patients. This led to the judgment against Purdue Pharma. The opiates (such as Percocet, Vicoden) that are prescribed pain are at an all-time high rate of prescription. In the northeast region has a higher rate of prescription. Young people don't understand the harm of misuse. Senior citizens who have many medications need the education as well. They have a program called "15 Minutes with a Pharmacist". It's about creating awareness. The highest prescribed pain killer is Vicoden. They've formed a round table of physicians, dentists, and pharmacists to look at prescriptions that don't cause addiction. It's an issue that's across the country, and Gloucester is trying to take the big steps to prevent abuse. These medications have a use when prescribed properly under a doctor's care.

By unanimous consent the City Council referred the matter of the Board of Health pursuance of a Proper Storage and Disposal of Prescription Drugs Initiative Grant to the Budget & Finance Committee.

2. Other Business

A) 911 Regional Dispatch Center

Councilor Hardy stated that there was a memo sent by the Mayor's office and looks as though Gloucester is no longer needed to make the quota. The question will be posed to the entire Council on Tuesday, April 13th is whether we go forward to place the advertisement for a public hearing.

A motion was made, seconded and voted unanimously to adjourn at 4:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**Dana C. Jorgenson
Clerk of Committees**