

**Meeting Minutes
Thurmont Addiction Commission**

March 8, 2018. 7pm- 9pm

Attendees:

Commissioner Michael Randall	Commission Co-chair, Voting member
Commissioner Rachel Hubbard	Voting member
Commissioner Kim Kerens	Voting member
Commissioner Edward Schildt	Voting member
Commissioner Myra Derbyshire (Secretary)	Non-Voting member (alternate)
Town Commissioner Martin Burns	Town Council Liaison
General Public	

TAC approved the February commission minutes written by Commissioner Derbyshire.

Commission co-chairman Michael Randall gave the opening remarks: He felt that over the last 2 months TAC has a lot of traction and press, particularly with the DMV news story distributed about Ed and Karen Schildt by social media on building addiction awareness and support within their community (<http://www.localdvm.com/news/i-270/family-takes-sons-overdose-death-to-help-create-change-with-local-commission/988636024>). Commissioner Randall felt that overall the word was getting out about TAC, and that more people were becoming aware of addiction and the opioid epidemic. He said that one of his personal struggles was dealing with the difficulty in getting involvement from people who felt they were not personally affected by addiction. He said that it was hard to find people that truly care if they haven't been personally affected, he hoped that with time and increasing education and awareness we could get past this hurdle.

Town Commissioner Martin Burns added, that if one thinks that their child can't pick up heroin, that's not true, and one can get heroin any time of day, therefore everyone needs to get educated, and to get out here and learn. He reminded the commission that TAC has made inroads, and slowly and surely people will come around, as they become more educated about this. He added that many of the things TAC is working on, here and in the support pillars, including the Thurmont CARR coaching academy, will help.

Commissioner Derbyshire added that it is important to involve recovering addicts in the solution.

Comments from the town office: Town Commission Burns offered that Commissioner Churchill could possibly use letter head with town logo for the letters to go out from TAC. He discussed raising funds, grant writing and the 501c3 status, he is in communication with Vickie Grinder on these. He will look into Commissioner Hubbard's request for placing a collection box for toiletries for recovering addicts in the town office.

TAC accepted the concept of the Needle exchange/ Harm reduction program in Thurmont

The majority of the meeting was devoted to reaching a decision on whether TAC should “accept the concept of the Needle exchange/ Harm reduction program in Thurmont, following a presentation and discussion on “Harm reduction services” given on Feb 13 by the Frederick County Health department to the town of Thurmont.

Commission co-chairman Michael Randall read Commissioner Jay Churchill (TAC co-chair) email in favor of the harm reduction strategy. In the email Commissioner Churchill listed many pros for the Needle exchange/Harm reduction strategy including public health benefits, the saving of money, and that criminalization of addiction worsens the stigma that TAC is trying to reduce, and this program helps break down those barriers.

Following is the listing of points made by the commissioners and members of the attending public.

- Anticipate further discussion with the health dept, and further deliberation and public comment on this strategy.
- Down the road, we want to be able to measure if the program has had a positive impact
- Chief Eyler should have statistics for drug related crimes occurring in town, the kind of drug arrest, are needles and paraphernalia found, etc... Town Commissioner Burns will try to get the town report to present at future TAC meetings.
- At this point all options are on the table for the details of the program. We would need to work out particulars of what is “the art of the possible”. The details of the program will be negotiated later.
- The Harm reduction strategy may offer HIV and Hepatitis C testing, which might attract a larger number of people. One measure for its continued grant funding may be the number of people tested etc...
- Keep track of numbers, for example: how many people participate, and how many needles are exchanged.
- Distrust with police and targeting
- Need to break the mind-set that addicts are criminals. Addicts are worth saving, these are human beings. It’s a relapse disease, and this might be the time that the cycle is broken and a life can be saved
- We need a shift to understanding addiction as a disease. “Education, education, education: this is what will make a change,” TAC needs to continue working on this change.
- Town Commission Burns felt that TAC is doing a disservice by not televising the TAC meetings, and that hearing people talk is very powerful.

TAC then voted on the motion to “accept” the concept of the harm reduction program in Thurmont. The motion passed, all were in favor.

Prevention Pillar: Commission co-chairman Michael Randall reported that this pillar is in communication with Deb Spalding and Jim Humerick. So that people are more informed about the many activities going on in Thurmont, the pillar is working on developing a centralized communication, along the lines of a Thurmont Calendar, with an online portal, the details still need to be flushed out. Jay Hessler from the health department gave a good presentation to the senior center. The pillar is finalizing a flyer to distribute to Little league, and CYA etc.

Education and awareness. Commissioner Ed Schildt gave an update on speakers for the monthly seminar program: for the March meeting, Rena Larkin to speak on “addiction as a family disease”. Speakers are actively being recruited for upcoming months. Commissioner Burns added that he would like to see recovering addicts presenting on recovery is possible. Upcoming speakers for May are Jay Hessler from the health department who will talk about addiction as a disease, and June’s speaker will be a youth counselor from Ashley Addiction Treatment. TAC will have a table at the upcoming Thurmont business showcase April 28th. Other upcoming events were mentioned including: The Night of remembrance Dec 20th, and Catocin Colorfest.

Commissioner Hubbard continues to work on getting a suicide awareness, umttr (Your life matters) program, a peer-to-peer program, into the high school. (<http://umttr.org/> , umttr empowers schools and youth athletic organizations with the funds, information, and tools they need to create a compassionate culture where every person matters). We were reminded that addiction comes in many forms.

Support and recovery: Commissioner Derbyshire updated TAC on various activities of the pillar including the April CARR recovery coach training to be given by the Health Department in Thurmont on April 11, 12 and April 25, 26 between 8:30am and 4:30pm (participants must attend all days). She reported that the pillar has also been working with the Education and awareness pillar and has recruited speakers for their May and June events. The pillar is also communicating with Becky Pearl on an art scholarship or therapeutic riding opportunity for someone possibly someone in recovery. In addition, they are following up with the health dept on their interest in having a Recovery center in Thurmont, and a few members of the pillar will be traveling to Belair later in April to meet with a recovery house renting a farm and build around an agricultural theme.

New business:

Town Commissioner Burns asked: Should we televise TAC meetings? Commission co-chairman Michael Randall felt it could be helpful with the caveat that the camera could be turned off for sensitive conversations. If so Town Commissioner Burns suggested a structured agenda that is published ahead of time. The motion to televise future meetings carried: 4 good, 2 pending. If Commissioner Jay Churchill has an objection, we will decide how proceed.

Town Commissioner Burn suggested increasing outreach using survey monkey, with a link to survey monkey on the electric bill, the survey might include a sponsored TAC questionnaire.

Public discussion: The meeting was then opened up to public discussion: the following comments were added by members of the public:

A suggestion was made that outreach could be/should be to children even younger than middle school.

David Brooks of “Brooks Behavioral Health Service” asked TAC for assistance in finding a facility to rent in Thurmont that’s feasible for both group therapy and individual treatment from a mental health therapist. Town Commissioner Burn’s asked that Mr. Brooks to give us a written description in which he was very specific for what he’s looking for, for example the square footage he would need, what he is willing to pay for rent etc. in order that we have a better feel for what he’s after. Those present further discussed also attracting other treatment programs to Thurmont.

Encourage local businesses to hire recovering addicts. We were reminded that Frederick County Workforce Services (FCWS) is the best kept secret.

Meeting adjourned at 8:56pm