

City files lawsuit against makers of opioids

The City of Costa Mesa has filed a lawsuit against the manufacturers and distributors of pain medication, who are the root cause behind the national opiate crisis.

The city intends to aggressively pursue the reimbursement of the tax dollars spent on a crisis that should never have occurred. The city intends to use any recovery from this lawsuit, filed on Friday March 29, to help manage the impacts of this crisis in Costa Mesa.

“This epidemic has personally touched the lives of many members of our community,” Mayor Katrina Foley said. “It’s time that we take action and put a halt to the lives being destroyed and the economic drain opioid addiction is placing on our community.”

Mayor Foley noted the death of Costa Mesa Fire Capt. Mike Kreza, who was struck and killed while riding his bike. The driver of the car that struck Capt. Kreza, according to news reports, was driving while under the influence of opioids or narcotics. And just last month, police and fire crews rescued a baby who was in medical distress. Later it was determined that baby had the drug fentanyl in her system.

Additionally, the city of Costa Mesa has the largest concentration of sober living homes in Orange County, creating a plethora of nuisance issues for residents, multiple calls for service by police and fire and millions of dollars in legal fees. Many of these sober living home residents are recovering from opioid addiction.

According to a 2017 report by the Orange County Health Care Agency, “In Orange County, there were 7,457 opioid overdose/abuse cases treated in emergency departments (ED)

between 2011 and 2015. Importantly, seven of every 10 overdose deaths investigated by the Orange County Sheriff-Coroner during this five-year period involved opioids.”

The report found that between 2011 and 2015, Costa Mesa had some of the highest increases in the numbers of opioid related emergency room visits and opioid deaths in the county. Emergency visits in Costa Mesa jumped 58 percent from 74 in 2011 to 174 in 2015 and deaths rose 20 percent from 9 in 2011 to 15 in 2015.

More than 4,000 individuals were hospitalized for opioid use and the report stated “on average, each hospitalization stay resulted in over \$33,000 in charges.”

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