

## Commission views presentation on opioid litigation

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The Lee County Commission addressed the opioid crisis during its first meeting of 2018 Monday evening.

Attorneys Christy Crow and Bill Fuller from the firm Jinks, Crow & Dickson asked the commission to consider joining other cities and counties in Alabama and the nation in holding prescription opiate manufacturers accountable.

“There are thousands of people every year who die of opioid overdoses,” Crow told the commission. “It’s a problem across the country, and it’s a problem here. Lee County had 64.5 opiod prescriptions per 100 people last year. The people that cause this are the manufacturers and the distributors of opioids.”

Multi-district litigation was formed in December, which means all cases from around the country are consolidated. Law firms from the various states involved are working together to represent them.

“This isn’t a class-action suit, where even if you don’t participate, you recover,” Crow explained. “Any city or county who wants to participate actually has to file a claim.”

Over 180 cities and counties nationwide have filed claims as a part of the multi-district litigation, according to an information packet supplied by Crow and Fuller. In Alabama, local governments represented include the cities of Birmingham, Mobile, Fort Payne, Opp and Gadsden, along with Etowah and Tallapoosa counties.

No action was taken by the commission Monday night, but possible future action could include passing a resolution acknowledging the problem and filing a claim against opiate manufacturers.

“This issue knows no social barriers,” District 2 Commissioner Johnny Lawrence said. “It’s young, it’s old, it’s wealthy, it’s poor. It crosses all the different lines of diversity that we have. But I’d like to look at it a little bit more after hearing the presentation.”

The commission also approved a change order for a project at the Beulah Senior Center. A new parking lot for the senior center cannot be poured on the existing soil, so the bad dirt will be excavated and hauled out and replaced with new compacted fill. The vote passed unanimously, with District 4 Commissioner Robert Ham absent from the meeting.

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