

County lawmakers table local law on heroin/opioid epidemic

- By RICK MILLER, Olean Times Herald, Mar 15, 2018
 - LITTLE VALLEY — Cattaraugus County lawmakers had expected to approve a local law declaring the heroin/opioid epidemic a public nuisance Wednesday following a public hearing.
 - An Olean family physician, Dr. Michael Kalsman, however, urged the Legislature to reconsider some of the wording in the proposed local law to reflect negligence on the part of distributors and prescribers.
 - The law “does not distinguish between those prescribing and dispensing in a responsible and lawful manner as opposed to being negligent,” Kalsman said.
 - When the resolution on the local law came to the floor later, Portville Republican Dan Hale moved that it be referred back to the Human Services and Finance committees to be refined.
 - “I think we can amend this to your satisfaction,” Legislature Chairman James J. Snyder, R-Olean, told Kalsman, referring the resolution to the committees.
 - The law firm Napoli Shoinik of New York City, hired by the county as outside counsel in a class-action lawsuit against drug companies in relation to the opioid epidemic, recommended the adoption of the local law.
 - The county’s measure is called “Local Law Declaring the Opioid Epidemic and Its Effects on Cattaraugus County A Public Nuisance and Establishing a Cost Recovery Procedure for the County’s Expenditures Incurred in Providing Services Related to the Opioid Epidemic.”
 - Minority Leader John Padlo, D-Olean, one of the sponsors, told Kalsman that the intent of the local law was not to impact local physicians or pharmacists.
 - “My focus is on the pharmaceutical companies” for misleading physicians on the addictive nature of opioids, Padlo said.
 - IN OTHER ACTION, legislators:
 - Heard a presentation from a Department of Energy representative on upcoming scoping sessions for phase 2 of the cleanup at the West Valley Demonstration Project in the town of Ashford.
 - Appointed Jeffrey VanDeCar acting director of nursing homes at \$30,000 a year until a permanent director can be appointed.