

Governors ask Trump, Congress to do more on opioid crisis

By GEOFF MULVIHILL
Associated Press

CHERRY HILL, N.J. — Less than three months after President Donald Trump declared the U.S. opioid crisis a public health emergency, the nation's governors are calling on his administration and Congress to provide more money and coordination for the fight against the drugs, which are killing more than 90 Americans a day.

The list of more than two dozen recommendations made Thursday by the National Governors Association is the first coordinated, bipartisan response from the nation's governors since Trump's October declaration.

The governors praised him for taking a first step, which included a pledge to support states' efforts to pay for drug treatment through Medicaid, the joint federal-state health insurance program for low-income people. But the governors also called for more action.

"While progress has been made, the consequences of opioid addiction continue reverberating throughout society," the governors said in their recommendations, "devastating families and overwhelming health care providers, law enforcement and social services ..."

They said the crisis was beginning to erode the nation's workforce and undermine companies' ability to hire.

Trump's emergency declaration came in response



In this Nov. 8 file photo, Steph Gaspar, a volunteer outreach worker with The Hand Up Project, an addiction and homeless advocacy group, holds a used and blood-filled needle used for drug injection that she found while cleaning up a homeless encampment in Everett, Wash.

to recommendations from a commission he appointed to address the toll of opioids, a class of drugs that ranges from prescription painkillers to illegal drugs such as heroin and illicit fentanyl. It was chaired by former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, a Republican who left office this week.

The governors' recommendations come after a federal judge in Cleveland pushed for a settlement in a series of lawsuits filed by state and local governments against the pharmaceutical industry.

"The opioid and heroin

epidemic knows no boundaries, and governors across the country are keenly aware of the challenges it poses for our communities and the growing need for comprehensive, bipartisan solutions to help end the epidemic," Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker, a Republican who serves as chairman of the governors' association health committee, said in a statement.

A spokesman for the White House Office on National Drug Control Policy said the administration is committed to working with states and addressing their

recommendations. The office said Trump has called for a coordinated approach to reduce overdose deaths.

The governors are asking for a requirement that drug prescribers undergo substance abuse training and register to use state databases that monitor prescriptions of dangerous drugs. They also seek increased access to naloxone, a drug that reverses overdoses, and asked that Medicare cover methadone treatment for senior citizens.

They said the federal government needs to do more to block illicit versions of synthetic drugs such as



In this Sept. 7 file photo, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker speaks at the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee hearing to discuss ways to stabilize health insurance markets, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

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— Charlie Baker, Governor of Massachusetts

fentanyl from being shipped into the U.S. Last year, the Department of Justice issued indictments of two Chinese companies accused of sending fentanyl illegally into the U.S., one of several anti-opioid moves by the federal government.

The governors took a conciliatory tone in their document, calling for state-federal partnerships. That contrasts with a harsher rebuke on Wednesday from a group of 10 Democratic U.S. senators who said Trump was leaving open key adminis-

trative positions in agencies tasked with dealing with the opioid crisis.

The senators took aim at the appointment of a 24-year-old former Trump campaign worker, Taylor Weyeneth, as deputy chief of staff at the Office of National Drug Control Policy. *The Washington Post* reported this week that after the newspaper began asking questions about Weyeneth's rise, he was reassigned to a lower-ranking job. There remains no permanent director at the office.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Businesses on the third floor of the Bowman Building have already moved, or are in the process of moving to make way for residential apartments.

HOUSING: 2017 permits set a ten-year high

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a playground and fitness center.

Brusselback said the rental prices aren't finalized, but they're currently considering charging \$1,450 per month. Contractors are already preparing the site for construction, and Brusselback is aiming to have the duplexes finished by late summer or early fall.

The duplexes aren't the only housing project under development in what's shaping up to be a banner year for homebuilding.

Bowman Building
A former Pendleton city councilor himself, developer Al Plute returned to council chambers Tuesday with a proposition.

Having already renovated the St. George Plaza and the Brown Building apartment complexes, Plute told the council that he was now focused on adding new apartments at a third downtown property: the Bowman Building.

A three-story building on the corner of Frazer Avenue and South Main Street, Plute said he has mostly used the building for office space since he bought it in 2008. During that time, he said it's been 100 percent occupied only once, and that period lasted about three weeks.

He was inspired to make the change when he was showing an office to a prospective tenant who told him the spaces were pretty enough to live in.

Plute said he's ready to convert the third floor into 16 studio apartments and two one-bedroom units while the second floor will remain office space. The apartments will range between 267 and 520 square feet and either

cost \$650 or \$725 per month. He anticipated the units will appeal to college students, personnel testing unmanned aerial systems on extended stays in Pendleton and people living on social security, and expects them to be rented before the project is completed.

Plute estimated the Bowman renovation project would cost between \$800,000 and \$1 million. Through the Pendleton Development Commission's various grant programs, Plute said he wanted to request between \$300,000-\$400,000 from the commission next month.

"This project is a tough project," he said. "Nobody in the downtown is putting in second story development." If Plute can get the funding together, he wants to start construction in April with the goal of finishing in September.

The Bowman isn't the only property he plans to reconfigure. He told the council he also wants to add six ground-level apartment units to the St. George.

Big picture
2017 was shaping up to be another slow year for housing permit activity before a last-minute flurry set a ten-year high.

Through November, the city issued 26 building permits for single family, multi-family and manufactured homes, right in line with the yearly average. But Brusselback's duplexes and three additional houses pushed that number to 55.

While the Pendleton City Council has a goal of seeing 50 or more dwellings built per year, Mayor John Turner said he wanted to wait until the houses planned in 2017 are finished before chalking up a victory.

But he did find it encouraging that a developer cited the city's housing study when considering home construction. Turner, who led the committees who oversaw the housing studies in 2011 and 2016 and chairs the city's current housing committee, said the city didn't market itself or provide housing data to potential developers before the studies were created.

While the 28th Drive duplexes might cost more than a mortgage payment for a similar-sized single-family home, Turner said it would allow some residents to move out of substandard housing.

Turner has mentioned new additions to the Pendleton Heights and Sunridge Estates subdivisions as other developments that could further boost housing numbers.

To alleviate Pendleton's "screaming need" for housing, Turner has a few other initiatives he would like to see explored in the future.

The housing committee has been looking at creating a revolving loan fund, Turner said, which would provide a bridge between private financing and project cost.

The mayor also wants something done about "zombie properties," blighted homes that have undergone foreclosure and are unoccupied for extended periods of time.

Lastly, Turner wants Pendleton to land a large-scale development. He pointed to large tracts of land available above North Hill and between Interstate 84 and the city's water filtration plant as potential development candidates.

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ARREST: Between 15 and 20 law enforcement officials joined the search

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Phillips and put him in the back seat of the patrol car, but released Morris. He then requested a tow truck to impound the Explorer.

Daugherty stayed in the front of his patrol car until the tow truck arrived, then got out to speak to the driver but left his patrol vehicle running for warmth.

According to a press release from the sheriff's department, Phillips moved his cuffed hands and arms from behind his back to the front, then broke the rear window of the patrol car. Crawling out of the back window and into the driver's seat, he drove away, crashing the vehicle into a small canal nearby at the corner of Tabor and Punkin Center roads.

The patrol vehicle was damaged, but all police equipment was recovered. It was towed away shortly after.

But when police arrived Phillips was gone and the search began.

Beginning at 10:40 a.m., more than a dozen officers from seven local agencies combed the area, knocking on doors and looking for Phillips. The sheriff's department search and rescue team brought out its drone and the U.S. Forest Service brought its K-9 unit.

At 1:15 p.m., residents on Cowboy Lane near Diagonal called to say someone was pounding on doors in the area. Deputies found Phillips, now uncuffed, and after a foot chase arrested him near the Short Stop gas



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

Law enforcement officers were searching for a man who stole a sheriff's patrol car, then crashed it and ran from the scene near Tabor and Dallas roads. The man was arrested around 1:20 p.m. Thursday.

"Depending on what we learn, in his trajectory from the crash to where we apprehended him, he may have committed other crimes."

— Jim Littlefield, Umatilla County Undersheriff

station at 32553 E. Punkin Center Road.

Umatilla County Undersheriff Jim Littlefield said he did not know the exact route Phillips took from where he had crashed to where he was arrested or how many doors Phillips knocked on, but said none of the residents opened the doors or interacted with Phillips.

Littlefield said they searched the area from Tabor Lane and Punkin Center Road to the junction of Punkin Center and Diagonal roads. He estimated between 15 and 20 law enforcement officials joined the search, including Hermiston, Stanfield and Umatilla police, Oregon State Police,

Umatilla County Community Corrections and the U.S. Forest Service.

Littlefield said further charges may be added, potentially property damage or theft.

"Depending on what we learn, in his trajectory from the crash to where we apprehended him, he may have committed other crimes," Littlefield said. He was not sure if Phillips was under the influence of any drugs.

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NAKAPALAU: Was elected with eight write-in votes

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out there would not be a quorum in attendance.

Nakapalau was elected with eight write-in votes during the November 2016 election and was sworn in at the beginning of 2017 for a four-year term.

Berry said now that Nakapalau has resigned, the council can choose whether to leave the seat empty until the upcoming general election in November when the three other council seats will be up for election, or establish a procedure for appointing someone to the seat until the election.

Berry said she didn't have any further comment regarding Nakapalau and his resignation.

Mayor Jeanie Hampton

said she couldn't comment as to what action the council might take to address the empty seat.

She said she couldn't recall when she had first heard rumor of the child pornography charges, but local police reported to her that Nakapalau was not a registered sex offender.

"Nothing was confirmed, and then all the sudden we had cameras in our faces," she said about the December council meeting.

Court documents obtained by the *East Oregonian* do not indicate why Nakapalau was not placed on the sex offender registry, but show he served eight days in jail, 52 days on work/education release and one year under community

supervision under which he could not possess a computer outside of work.

An order of discharge from the Clark County Court shows he completed all the requirements of his sentence in 2007 and his civil rights, including the ability to hold public office, were restored.

Nakapalau has not responded to requests for comment or explanation.

After a tumultuous few months for the city council, Hampton said she was looking forward to being able to focus on other city business, including planned upgrades to the sewer system.

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