

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA, DECEMBER 9, 2019:

**RESOLUTION 1371**

**In Support of Appalachian Center for Hope, a Residential Treatment Facility**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Salem recognizes the need for a residential treatment facility not only for Salem City citizens but those citizens region wide; and

**WHEREAS**, Southwest Virginia has been disproportionately impacted for years by the addiction crisis, and a successful response to any regional crisis requires that people in those affected communities come together; and

**WHEREAS**, regional leaders and organizations have come together with a project that would address the addiction crisis and provide hope for many of our neighbors and their families, this project is called Appalachian Center for Hope; and

**WHEREAS**, there is an existing facility located on the grounds of Southwest Virginia Mental Health Institute, Marion, Virginia, that could be utilized for a Women's Residential Treatment Facility to aid in providing services to assist in helping women stay clean and sober; and

**WHEREAS**, communication has occurred between the Commonwealth of Virginia and interested parties from Smyth County to lease said building, as a budget neutral lease for three (3) years, requesting all repairs and renovations be made by the Commonwealth before entering into such a lease; and with the understanding should the programs not be successful, the building will remain as property of SWVMHI; and

**WHEREAS**, there is great hope with the request and acquisition of the building that Smyth County can continue to offer more services to those region wide to aid in battling ongoing addictions that have plagued much of our Region.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Council of the City of Salem, Virginia, hereby supports Smyth County's request to lease said building from the Commonwealth of Virginia with said terms.

Upon a call for an aye and a nay vote, the same stood as follows:

John E. Saunders –  
James A. Martin –  
William D. Jones –  
Jane W. Johnson –  
Byron Randolph Foley –

ATTEST:

---

James E. Taliaferro, II  
Clerk of Council  
City of Salem, Virginia

art by Virginia M. Greer



## Clerk's Office Circuit Court of Smyth County

John H Graham, Esq.  
Clerk of Court

109 West Main Street, Suite 1081  
Marion, Virginia 24354  
Email: [jgraham@courts.state.va.us](mailto:jgraham@courts.state.va.us)

(276) 782-4044 voice  
(276) 782-4045 fax

October 10, 2019

The Honorable Dr. Ralph Northam  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia  
Post Office Box 1475  
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

As you know, Southwest Virginia has been disproportionately impacted for years by the addiction crisis. A successful response to any regional crisis requires that people in those affected communities come together. In that vein, regional leaders and organizations have come together with a project that would address the addiction crisis and provide hope to many of our neighbors and their families. We call this project the Appalachian Center for Hope.

In your recent press release announcing the extension of the Advisory Commission on Opioids and Addiction, Dr. Daniel Carey's quote about closing the gaps in services resonated with what we aim to achieve through this initiative. We are working to bring residential therapeutic community treatment to our region, which is perhaps the largest gap in services for those suffering from addiction, especially for women who have young children.

All too often, people who have been active drug users will complete a detox program or be released from jail, intending to live sober lives, but there are no residential options available for them where they can find the treatment, support, and healing necessary for recovery. While they may be motivated to live sober lives, they soon find themselves back in their former environments without the skills and support to be successful. They fail, the cycle begins again, and they become hopeless.

The Appalachian Center for Hope will close this gap and serve residents from all of Southwest Virginia. The program will consist of a multi-sector, cross-jurisdictional collaboration which will provide



services to those suffering from addiction and assist them in the various stages of recovery. The Center would begin operation in the following phases:

- Phase 1 – Transfer the “rehab” building on the campus of Southwestern Virginia Mental Health Institute (SVMHI) from state to county ownership via an initial three-year lease agreement;
- Phase 2 – Open therapeutic community programming for women. Children up to school age may reside with their mothers, as this is often a major barrier for women who are interested in seeking treatment;
- Phase 3 – Open a day reporting component (for women and men) for the program, to include job training/workforce development, to divert people with substance use problems from jail. This will lower locality costs for incarceration, increase employability of participants, and foster community productivity and growth;
- Phase 4 – Expand therapeutic community programming to include men.

The need for a regional approach offered by the Appalachian Center for Hope is reinforced by the following figures<sup>1</sup>:

	Coverage area	Virginia
Prescription Opioid Overdose Death Rate	7.9/100,000	5.9/100,000
Emergency Department Visit for Opioid Overdose Rate	117.9/100,000	86.5/100,000
Hepatitis C Among 18-30 Year Olds	378.4/100,000	130.8/100,000
Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome	24.5/1,000	7.7/1,000
Children Entering Foster Care <sup>2</sup>	4.5/1,000	1.5/1,000

Other figures illuminate the myriad costs the crisis has inflicted upon our localities. For example, the regional jail costs in Smyth County alone rose from \$650,000 in 2009 to \$2,900,000 in 2019, an increase of \$2,250,000 or 346%. The Center, especially through its day reporting program, will eventually reduce jail costs across the region.

<sup>1</sup> Virginia Department of Health (VDH). (2019). Opioid Addiction. <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/data/opioid-overdose/>

<sup>2</sup> Voices for Virginia's Children. (2018). A Snapshot of Children in the Southwest Region. <https://vakids.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/VVC-KidsCount-2018Infographics-WEB-Southwest.pdf>

Letter to Governor Northam  
October 10, 2019  
Page three

Moreover, the Center will aid workforce development throughout the region, producing graduates who are not only in recovery but skilled. Through job skills training, workforce development, job placement, and community service, the Center will produce graduates who are contributing members of society.

For this project, we are currently assessing different treatment models that have proven successful in other regions of the country. We expect to soon move forward with the implementation of the model that best accomplishes our goal of closing the gap of available services in our region. This ironic reality compels us: there are no residential therapeutic treatment facilities available in the part of Virginia where they are needed most.

This project aligns with Virginia's Plan for Well-Being. It is part of a local community health assessment and collaborative health improvement process to address substance use, mental health, and child abuse in the county. The project will keep families together, reducing trauma and the associated lifelong impacts. We hope to reduce substance use-related hospitalizations and the number of infants who are born substance-exposed. The Appalachian Center for Hope will result in a healthier, more connected Southwest Virginia, a stronger start for affected children, and will prevent the harms of continued substance use for this generation and those to come.

#### Who are we?

Our group is borne out of a larger consortium that was first brought together in 2017 by Smyth County Community Hospital for a community needs assessment when Ballad Health was formed. After we completed our appointed task, we looked around the room, saw the passion and commitment from so many vital partners, and resolved that we could not "stop there." We felt compelled to not only identify the needs to but to join forces to address these needs and make a difference to strengthen our community. This group is comprised of the Smyth County Sheriff's Office, Smyth County Community Hospital, Smyth County Circuit Court Clerk, Smyth County Administrator, Smyth County Schools, Mount Rogers Health District Virginia Department of Health, Smyth County ministerial associations, Mount Rogers Community Services, Regional Substance Use Coordinator for Region 3 of DBHDS, Virginia Tech Extension, Probation/Parole, Southwest Virginia Legal Aid, the Police Departments from the three towns in Smyth County, Southwest Virginia Community Health Systems, and others.

This consortium has a proven record of accomplishment. We were awarded and are implementing a HRSA Rural Health Opioid Grant for \$735,000 that provides navigation for people who present to the local hospital with substance use issues. We initiated a comprehensive harm reduction program, only the third in the state, which has already resulted in participants entering recovery and being cured of hepatitis C, exceeding outcome goals. We issued a "Call to Action" for area churches to initiate new recovery ministries, which spurred new outreach in several communities all over the county. We are seeking to establish in our county a concentrated effort like in Giles County, using GIS mapping, to focus the community's full range of services on neighborhoods with highest rates of

Letter to Governor Northam

October 10, 2019

Page four

substance use and assistive services. Finally, we are in the process of becoming a trauma-informed community, both to understand how childhood exposure to trauma contributes to future addiction and mental health problems and to develop community strategies to build resiliency. Simply put, we are committed to making a difference in our community.

What are we asking from you?

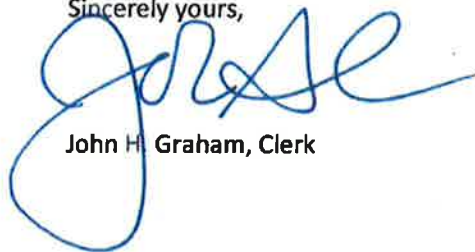
We have two requests, the first of which is to support the conditional lease transfer of the "rehab building" at SVMHI to Smyth County. Secondly, we ask you to include a special budget allocation to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services in the amount of two million dollars (\$2,000,000) to complete basic renovation of the building. The building is a sturdy, stable building, but having been built in the 1930s, it needs modest repairs, most significantly heat/air, electric, and plumbing upgrades. Our General Assembly delegation (Senator Ben Chafin and Delegates Todd Pillion, Israel O'Quinn, and Jeff Campbell) has toured the building, and each has expressed support for the project, both for the gift of the building and our requested budget allocation.

We may currently be short on treatment options for the people of our region, but we are not short on vision, momentum, or hope.

Both as our Governor and as a physician, you share our hope for a brighter future for those suffering from the addiction crisis. We seek your help in this hopeful endeavor.

Wishing you well, I am

Sincerely yours,



John H. Graham, Clerk

cc: Dr. Daniel Carey