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For immediate release

## Boards give early OK to assistance for planned drug/alcohol treatment center

The Rice County Board of Commissioners have agreed in principle to help subsidize a drug and alcohol treatment center set to locate in Faribault.

Support for the \$10 million inpatient and outpatient facility proposed by Midwest Recovery came during Tuesday's joint session of the Board of Commissioners and Faribault City Council. The company currently operates an inpatient center for men in Northfield and an outpatient facility in Faribault.

Rice County Sheriff Jesse Thomas, Faribault Police Chief John Sherwin and both of their predecessors have spoken often about the lack of local options for area residents seeking treatment for drug and/or alcohol addiction, and the connection between substance abuse and other crimes such as theft and burglary.

According to information Sherwin shared with both boards, Rice County law enforcement has responded to 21 non-fatal overdoses and six fatal overdoses in the county in the last 12 months.

Data provided by Healthy Community Initiative found Rice County had 28 suspected drug overdoses in 2021.

In 2021, 446 Rice County residents accessed treatment for chemical dependency, according to Sherwin. In 2019, there were 489, with 279 in residential treatment facilities. Only 4% of those could access treatment in the county.

The project, planned for Cardinal Avenue near the interstate will be built in phases. The first will include the outpatient facility. The inpatient facility, including space for those needing to detox, will come two to three years later, said Midwest Recovery President Michael McHugh.

A total of 40 full-time equivalent positions – ranging from \$20/hour to \$130,000/year – will be created, said Faribault Community and Economic Development Director Deanna Kuennen.

"...Midwest Recovery's intentions of providing withdrawal management fill a critical and life-saving need in Faribault and Rice County," Sherwin, and Kuennen said in a memo to both governmental bodies.



Midwest Recovery President Michael McHugh, left, talks about a substance abuse treatment facility his company plans to construct in Faribault during a joint Rice County Board of Commissioners/Faribault City Council meeting Sept. 13. Also pictured are, from left, Commissioners Steve Underdahl, Dave Miller, Jeff Docken and Jim Purfeerst, and Faribault Mayor Kevin Voracek. (Rice County photo)

Currently, the closest detox facility is in Rochester; transporting individuals there removes an officer and squad car from the community for two hours. The alternative is the emergency room or to jail. But neither, Sherwin said, is a good solution.

“Detoxing is considered a medical condition and we are not long-term medical providers,” said Rice County Jail Administrator Jake Marinenko.

A public hearing on the proposed subsidy will be set for sometime this fall. Both the Board of Commissioners and City Council will then be asked to approve agreements with Midwest Recovery.

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