

THE ALPENA NEWS

County to seek input before deciding use for opioid settlement

ALPENA — County leaders will seek the advice of people involved with addiction-fighting efforts as they decide how to spend more than \$1 million headed toward the county in coming months.

On Tuesday, Alpena County commissioners agreed they would hold off until the county's portion of several billion-dollar lawsuit settlements reaches the county before deciding what to do with it.

The money must be used to combat the negative effects of an opioid crisis that has resulted in more than 500,000 overdose deaths, according to the terms of multiple settlements with drug manufacturers and distributors.

County commissioners have heard from multiple local agencies, including Catholic Human Services, Northeast Michigan Community Mental Health, District Health Department No. 4, the Alpena County Jail, and the 88th District Court drug court, all suggesting ways the county could use the money to fight drug addiction in Alpena.

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es for corrections officers so the
very-specific medical care,
loses, and other uses.

ity, commissioners won't try to

decide which idea would best serve the county.

But, when the time comes, commissioners will ask local groups with expertise in fighting addiction for guidance, said Mary Catherine Hannah, Alpena County Administrator.

The settlement terms allow the companies to pay gradually, so Alpena County's promised \$1.1 million will be spread over up to 20 years.

The first expected payment of \$65,000 may reach Alpena by year's end, Hannah said.

The Michigan Attorney General's Office initially said disbursements would begin in April, then pushed that date back to July.

As of last week, the Attorney General's Office said it had not yet sent out any initial settlement payments. It did not respond to a request for a new anticipated date for receipt of the funds or an explanation of the delay.

Commissioner Bob Adrian at a Board of Commissioners meeting on Tuesday suggested using the Northern Michigan Regional Entity, an organization that coordinates addiction-related prevention, treatment, and recovery support services in northern Michigan, to help the county vet the many suggestions for use of the opioid settlement money it expects to receive in coming months.

Alpena County stands to receive \$1.1 million from the opioid settlement, with \$500,000 anticipated to go to Presque Isle County and about \$300,000 each to Montmorency and Alcona counties, according to figures released by the Attorney General's Office in January.

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