

Bucks nonprofits get leftover funds

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Two Bucks nonprofits that service community groups in need are soon set to receive leftover grant money from the county relating to development in Bristol Township.

The Bucks County Opportunity Council will receive \$300,000 to renovate the former Planned Parenthood building in the 700 block of Veterans Highway into a new "opportunity center" providing anti-poverty services for homeless and low-income individuals and families.

In addition, the Family Service Association of Bucks County will

receive \$48,412 as reimbursement for recent emergency sewer repairs at its homeless shelter off New Falls Road near the Bucks County Free Library.

Both nonprofits already have successfully applied to become recipients of community development block grant money, left over from funds the county had received in previous years from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The groups can receive the extra funds after Bucks commissioners amend the county's 2017 action plan with HUD at their next meeting Monday.

The Opportunity Council will begin work on the old Planned

Parenthood building after it gets the funds from the county and receives project and permitting approval from Bristol Township, said Erin Lukoss, the council's executive director.

She estimated the construction will be completed around August or September.

Nine caseworkers and one supervisor will work at the center once it is complete, Lukoss said.

She estimated the center could serve as many as 50 people per day, ranging from planned appointments and referral calls to emergency situations.

"We're excited about it and we think it'll be really very good for the Lower Bucks region,"

she said.

"We're most excited about the housing and homeless services we feel we'll be able to provide out of this space, so we're looking forward to opening the doors. We're a ways away, but we're looking forward to opening the doors."

The Opportunity Council has plans to install a new elevator and two new bathrooms to bring the former Planned Parenthood building, which it purchased for \$670,000 in November 2017, into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Lukoss said.

Lukoss said the old building also will receive interior and exterior touch-ups and offer a phone recharging

station, laundry services and a community room for larger meetings.

The total renovation cost is roughly \$340,000, said Lukoss, who added that the council has so far raised about \$30,000 of the remaining \$40,000 it will need to complete the work.

Marlene Piasecki, interim chief executive officer with the Family Service Association, said the county homeless shelter's old pump station, which provides a connection to the township's sewer system, recently was rebuilt.

Beforehand, she said the pump station had failed, requiring shelter workers to pump it daily while rebuilding the replacement.

Morrisville to sue opioid firms

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Morrisville is entering a nationwide legal fray against major pharmaceutical companies.

By a unanimous vote, council members decided to work with Philadelphia firm Feldman & Pinto to evaluate how the opioid crisis has affected and will continue to affect Morrisville.

The borough then could sue for the money it spent on emergency services, drug awareness and disposal programs, as one of the hundreds of governments now participating in multi-district litigation over alleged improper opioid diversion and marketing.

If Morrisville wins in court, Feldman & Pinto will receive 20 percent of any damages the borough is awarded.

Before council members' vote, several residents spoke up in favor of the motion.

Resident Hal Wilcox told council members, "I'm telling you, if you don't OK to be a part of this lawsuit and go after the pharmaceutical companies, we're never going to kill this epidemic."

"You've gotta be a part of this."

The Healthcare Distribution Alliance, a national trade association representing opioid distributors, emailed this news organization a statement from John Parker, its senior vice president,

following a previous story about Morrisville's prospective lawsuit.

"The misuse and abuse of prescription opioids is a complex public health challenge that requires a collaborative and systemic response that engages all stakeholders," Parker said.

"Given our role, the idea that distributors are responsible for the number of opioid prescriptions written defies common sense and lacks understanding of how the pharmaceutical supply chain actually works and is regulated. Those bringing lawsuits would be better served addressing the root causes, rather than trying to redirect blame through litigation."

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