

Atchison designates domestic violence shelter

(KAIR)--A Leavenworth-based organization has been selected to provide domestic violence services for the City of Atchison.

That happened Monday during the regular meeting of the Atchison City Commission.

The need arose following the disbandment of DoVES Inc. in September, 2018, based on financial factors.

City Manager Becky Berger addressed the Commission Monday, outlining the need to retain Leavenworth's Alliance Against Family Violence to provide services. "The DoVES board decided to dissolve last fall," Berger explained. "There was an undertaking for another organization but it hasn't really gone anywhere, and we don't have a certified domestic violence and sexual assault shelter in our community right now, which is not uncommon for a community our size. Usually, the larger communities are the ones that are able to provide those services."

Atchison Police Chief Mike Wilson outlined the ways the legal system has changed through the years in handling matters of domestic violence, telling the Commission that having an organization in place is a key to seeing the needs of victims met. "One of the components we have found to be [important for the victims] is providing advocacy groups, counselors, a shelter, somebody to talk to, and as some of you may recall, one of those early resources in our community was DoVES [which provided] a very vital component that we needed."

Alliance Executive Director Jennifer Marsh addressed the Commission, and explained the history of her organization. "We closed in 2017. It was a decision of the board at that time, due to issues with grant repayment, mostly from the state. I was hired in December of 2018 and we fully reopened all of our services this April."

Marsh explained that since reopening, nearly 20-percent of her organization's clients are from Atchison. "We realized very early on that a lot of our clients were coming from Atchison. We have provided confidential shelter, we have provided court advocacy, we have provided hospital accompaniment for forensic exams, as well as case work, support groups, all of this to residents of Atchison."

Discussion followed the presentation, and once all questions were answered, and concerns eased, the Commission voted unanimously to designate the Alliance Against Family Violence as the City's official domestic violence shelter.

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