

Haywood County “Toeprints”

October 18, 2022

Vol. #13 Issue #12 (Subject: New Haywood County Recovery Court, by Judge Roy T. Wijewickrama.)

www.haywoodtp.net

What’s Happening?

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform Haywood County Taxpayers of what transpires at the bi-monthly County Commission Meetings. This newsletter will be written from the perspective of a casual observer, myself. Any opinions expressed will be mine.

New Haywood County Recovery Court.

Based on a request for information from the Concerned Citizens of Haywood (who meet every Thursday evening at the Buttered Biscuit), Chief District Court Judge Roy T. Wijewickrama responded with a detailed description of the New Haywood County Recovery Court.

Please find a detailed description of the New Haywood County Recovery Court, by Chief District Court Judge Roy T. Wijewickrama:

Thanks for your request for information regarding the new Recovery Court in Haywood County. First, you may want a little bit of background. The Recovery Court for Haywood County came about as a result of a bill that was introduced and co-sponsored by Senator Kevin Corbin in the North Carolina State Senate. When the last budget compromise came through, the state legislature ended up creating pilot programs for five separate counties to create a Recovery Court. Haywood county was one of those counties. The Legislature is essentially going to fund the Administrative Costs of the Recovery Court for two years. After that time the Legislature has directed the Counties to either further fund these Recovery Courts themselves or locate grant money that can continue to fund these particular courts. Furthermore, the Legislature has mandated that over the next two years the county must manage the funds which will be coming from Raleigh.

The Recovery Court in Haywood county will be under the direct supervision of the District Court. As a practical matter, what we are going to be attempting to do with our Recovery Court is to play a key role in helping addicts who need help (and want to be helped) through a rigorous and intensive court monitored program of recovery through accountability. For anyone to become a participant in this program, they must be addicted to either drugs or alcohol. Second, they must be charged with a drug related criminal offense. These individuals must plead guilty and accept responsibility. However, after pleading guilty these participants will not be sentenced. Instead, once they have gone through a proper screening process (i.e. ensuring they don’t have a violent past and that they are not charged with dealing drugs, etc.) they can enter into the Recovery Court. Once they go into the Recovery Court they will be going

before a Judge every two weeks. They will have to obtain a substance abuse assessment. It will be a much more in depth and comprehensive assessment than other criminal defendants go through in that it will delve into many other issues including mental health. These participants will be under strict orders not to use or possess any drugs or alcohol. Probation officers will be visiting their homes regularly (more so than those who are on regular probation). They will have to take drug tests when the probation officers make these visits. If they are “testing hot” (in other words testing positive for drugs), then I will very likely put them in jail for short period of time to grab their attention. This is the “accountability” part of this program. Make no mistake, we want to be very positive and complementary when the participants are appearing before us every other week. However, they have to know that while they are in this program, they will be accountable to the court for not following through with their treatment regimen. Their participation in this program will also require them to follow through with substance abuse classes, Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc. Also, the participants will not be in this program for a mere two or three months. We are expecting participants to be under this intensive Court supervision for a minimum of 12-18 months. Participants will also have the opportunity to go through job training through a grant that was recently received by HCC. If and when the participants successfully complete the program their original guilty pleas will be set aside and the cases will be dismissed. There will also be a type of a graduation ceremony celebrating their recovery and sobriety. Most importantly, it is our hope that they will be able to go out and be sober, productive members of our community. For those that are unable to successfully complete the Recovery Court (we will know after a few months who these people are), then the court will reopen their original case and they will be sentenced. The key thing to remember about Recovery Court is that these participants will be seeing a Judge and a prosecutor once every 14 days. This is extremely important in that the participants know that they cannot backtrack on their treatment/drug use because there will be consequences.

This is just a VERY brief overview of the Recovery Court that we will have in Haywood County. I am excited and eager to get this Recovery Court under way. If you would like to speak with me about this further please do not hesitate to contact me. I will be happy to go into more detail about the Recovery Court and how we plan to grow it and make it a true success.

Regards,
Roy Wijewickrama

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Legend: If any name is in **bold**, it can't be a good thing.

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Si vis pacem, para bellum