Commission sets public hearing date for Mental Health Agency transformation

A series of three public hearings are scheduled to be held throughout Wayne County in connection with the Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency (D-WCCMHA) and its transition into becoming an authority effective October 1, 2013.

The three public hearings are slated as follows: Northeast Guidance Center, 2900 Conner, in Detroit, Tuesday, April 30, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.; The Guidance Center, 13101 Allen Road, in Southgate, Tuesday, May 7, from 3-5 p.m.; and Starfish Family Service, 30000 Hively, in Inkster, Tuesday, May 14, from 6-8 p.m.

“This is a major alteration to the funding of this program and the Wayne County Commission is taking the necessary steps in assuring that services to citizens will not be affected at all as we undergo this transformation,” said Wayne County Commissioner Tim Killeen (D-District 1), who has been heading the proposed transition of the Mental Health Agency. “The information discussed at these public hearings will be of great value to citizens as the Mental Health Agency strives to continue providing outstanding services to some 70,000 Wayne County residents.
“I have taken my role very seriously in all this, and especially in the drafting of the enabling resolution so the Authority can be up and running on October 1, 2013 with all of the resources needed to serve those in need.”

Presently, the Agency operates under a $700 million-a-year budget, with the bulk of that funding emerging from the State of Michigan in the form of Medicaid dollars. However, last December, the State Legislature passed a bill to change the Agency from a county agency into a free-standing authority, thus altering the flow of money through the county to the agency.

Upon approval by the Commission, the existing agency will be dissolved Oct. 1 in favor of the authority which will then qualify for state funding support through an amendment of Public Act 258 that says a county that is situated totally within it a city having a population of a least 500,000 residents must establish or administer a community mental health services program as a community mental health authority.

The proposed authority board would be composed of 12 members – six appointed by a majority vote of the Commission from a list of nominees submitted by the County Executive and six appointed by a majority vote from a list of nominees submitted by the mayor of City of Detroit.

“The fiscal impact on the county will be a huge challenge for the Commission as we go through our budget deliberations later this summer,” Commissioner Killeen said. “On top of all our other fiscal troubles, the county will be very challenged to meet our obligations in light of this change in the governance for mental health services.”

The D-WCCMHA has been invested in involving more people with disabilities, advocates and families in the delivery of services and the formation of policy. It continues to create relationships with universities that foster cutting edge training and research to enhance
efficiency and has developed a public healthcare delivery organization committed to promoting, creating and ensuring timely, accessible, and culturally competent and clinically effective services.

Those attending any of the three public hearings and desiring to provide testimony are asked to do so in a written manner.

The proposed resolution can be viewed on the county’s website at www.waynecounty.com/commission.