

# Drug testing for contractors moves closer in Putnam

August 27, 2008, By Veronica Nett, Staff writer

WINFIELD - Putnam County commissioners took the first step Tuesday to ensure contractors employed by the county enforce a drug- and alcohol-free work environment.

The proposal will require all contractors employed in the county to implement a drug- and alcohol-testing program for its workers on county-funded construction projects.

Implementing and adhering to a testing program will be the responsibility of the contractor.

The commission will review a resolution based on the proposal at its next meeting.

The proposal stems from the West Virginia Alcohol and Drug-Free Workplace Act passed by the state Legislature in February.

The law went into effect July 1 and requires all businesses that are awarded public improvement contracts with the state to regularly test employees for drugs and alcohol.

The new law, however, does not apply to county-funded projects, said Dave McComas of the state Building and Trades Council, an umbrella organization that represents unions across West Virginia.

McComas pointed to a report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration that found one in 12 full-time workers in the United States acknowledged having used illegal drugs in the past month.

The highest rates of drug use were reported among restaurant workers, 17.4 percent, and construction workers, 15.1 percent, according to the federal study.

Putnam County Commissioners Gary Tillis and Joe Haynes said they could see no downside to the proposal.

Kanawha County passed a similar resolution earlier this month to adopt the same policies as spelled out in the state legislation.

Fayette, Greenbrier, Wayne, Harrison, Wyoming, Summers and Raleigh counties have adopted similar resolutions.

Also Tuesday, commissioners approved the transfer of two parcels of land owned by the county to the Development Authority.

The land, located in Nitro, is a suitable industrial site and is being handed over to the county's Development Authority to sell, County Administrator Brian Donat said.

The county is not accumulating any taxes on it, Haynes said, after Tuesday's meeting.

If sold, the site has the potential to generate tax revenue and bring jobs to the area, he said.

In other business:

Commissioner Haynes announced a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the county's first dog park at 6 p.m. on Sept. 1. The park is located in the Teays Valley Park behind the miniature golf course.

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