

Concrete-related proposals pass legislative committee

By Eric Bedner

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HARTFORD — Bills intended to provide protections to future and current homeowners with crumbling foundations cleared the legislative committee process Tuesday.

The proposals would require disclosing knowledge of the issue, and establish an \$8 million grant program to develop innovative ways to fix foundations at a reduced price.

The first piece of legislation would mandate that any owner, including banks and municipalities, disclose in a “residential condition report” anything known about pyrrhotite or foundation deterioration when selling a home.

Many of the provisions apply to concrete containing pyrrhotite, the mineral causing foundations to deteriorate.

Disclosures include the known presence of pyrrhotite, any testing or inspection done to determine the presence of pyrrhotite, any repairs due to the presence of pyrrhotite, and any foundation repair in general.

Sen. Gennaro Bizzarro, R-New Britain, raised concerns about the impact to municipalities and financial institutions that could be forced to absorb additional

responsibilities. Oftentimes, municipalities acquire properties through a foreclosure process, without much knowledge of the property, as do banks, he said.

While Bizzarro ultimately voted in favor of both bills, he said the disclosure requirement could place an undue burden on towns that would require a building inspector examine the property.

The Insurance and Real Estate Committee’s delegation from South Windsor, one of the most impacted communities, continued advocating during the debate.

Because of legislation passed by the state two years ago, Rep. Thomas Delnicki, R-South Windsor, said that many affected homeowners already have applied for property tax relief in their local assessor’s office, meaning municipalities should be aware of the location of many deteriorating properties. He added that banks selling affected homes also likely would know about the issue because information about reassessments is easily obtainable for financial institutions.

“There’s almost always some kind of knowledge because the victims have gone through that process to get the value of their property changed,” Delnicki said.

Sen. M. Saud Anwar, D-South Windsor, said the intent of the bill is to protect the buyer, regardless

of who the seller is.

The second proposal approved by the committee is a comprehensive bill to address various crumbling foundation issues. It would establish a grant program aimed at developing new ways of fixing foundations at a reduced cost.

From an \$8 million one-time allocation, each applicant to the Department of Housing that finds a way to properly fix foundations for less money would receive

between \$1 million and \$5 million from the state, with the grant depending on how much the cost is reduced. An application would have to be filed with the Housing Department commissioner, who then would file an application with the captive insurance company handling reimbursements to property owners seeking funds to pay for foundation repairs. The captive would determine if the applicant is eligible for a grant that

then would be administered by the Housing Department.

The measure also includes provisions such as modifying the \$12 surcharge added annually to homeowners insurance policies to ensure the fee is charged to only one policyholder, and changing the definition of “residential building” to make condominiums and planned multi-unit developments eligible for financial assistance from the captive.

Naloxone now available at every emergency room in the state

By Will Healey

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Every hospital emergency department in Connecticut now has the life-saving medication naloxone, often referred to by the brand name Narcan, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and Department of Consumer Protection have announced.

Naloxone reverses the effects of an opioid overdose, and can and has saved lives when applied in time. Because of this, first responders and emergency medical personnel across the country have started keeping the medication on hand.

A joint statement issued by both state agencies said the naloxone was funded using approxi-

mately \$400,000 in federal funds from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and administered by DMHAS through the State Opioid Response Grant.

According to the statement, nearly 6,000 doses of naloxone have been ordered and are being delivered to emergency departments throughout the state at no cost. The naloxone will be provided to patients and their loved ones upon discharge, not for administration in the emergency department, statement said. It also may be offered to individuals determined to be at risk for having an opioid overdose, even if that is not the problem they’re in the emergency room for.

DMHAS Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon said the

medication has saved “countless lives” in Connecticut and nationwide.

Department of Consumer Protection Commissioner Michelle H. Seagull said that though naloxone is only one tool to address the opioid crisis, it serves an important function.

In addition to the naloxone, the departments said, patients and loved ones receiving the medication will be given information on how to recognize an opioid overdose, how to use the medication in the event of an overdose, and what to do if the person regains consciousness.

Pharmacists who have been certified to prescribe and dispense naloxone also can dispense it to customers who request, under a 2015 law.