

State senators encourage Taking Back Our Community group (KLZA)-- Around 200 people attended the Taking Back Our Community group meeting Tuesday night at Falls City High School.

The audience provided a lot of thoughts and ideas during the meeting attended by 1st District State Senator Dan Watermeier of Syracuse and Senator Laura Ebke from Crete, who serves as Chair of the Legislatures Judiciary Committee.

Program moderator Bob Witt told the Senators that “we are looking for help from our leaders.” Witt said it is just a few people that are terrorizing a lot of people with their actions.

Audience members asked questions and made suggestions to the Senators as well as law enforcement personnel concerning the large amount of thefts and drug issues in the area.

County Judge Curtis Maschman and District Judge Julie Smith were both invited to attend the meeting but were not there.

Deputy County Attorney Samantha Scheitel read a letter from the Judges explaining that without a specific agenda and having the types of questions to be asked, they could not attend. In the letter they pointed out that a Judge must take special care to avoid comments that could manifest a bias or prejudice in a case they may be presiding over.

Following the meeting, Senator Watermeier said he supports the effort to organize a group to take on the problems. He suggested the group look to see how other communities are dealing with such issues.

Senator Ebke said she could sense the frustration from the audience. She suspects the crime and drug issues are similar in other towns where the population has decreased and a different element is moving in to take advantage of the lower cost of living.

Ebke said its likely going to take some time to solve these types of problems, but hopes between probation, law enforcement and the judicial system things will improve.

The audience asked why law enforcement can't do anything about what are perceived to be “drug houses”. How to get a Drug Court started in Richardson County. It was also suggested to put pressure on the so called “drug houses” by watching them and making the residents uncomfortable.

Law enforcement suggested the public needs to be involved in solving the problems by calling in complaints and passing along information.

Representatives with the State Probation Office suggested neighbors can submit letters to the Probation Office or the County Attorney's Office with information about people for probation reviews as well as pre-sentence investigations.

For more information on the Taking Back Our Community group you are invited to check out their page on Facebook.

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