

Johnson City Press

Bed bug infestation forces evacuation of Unicoi County ambulance station

Sue Guinn Legg • August 7, 2019

ERWIN — A bed bug infestation has forced Washington County/Johnson City Emergency Medical Services personnel to evacuate the rental home that has served as a station for ambulance service in Unicoi County for the past two years.

Lt. Adam Copas, director of WC/JC EMS operations in Unicoi County, told the Unicoi County Commissioners Tuesday night exterminators treated the house at 1501 N. Main Ave. late last week and advised the staff it must remain out of the house for at least 10 days.

Most of the furniture and all of the mattresses inside the house were thrown out, Copas said.

EMS personnel spent the first few days of their evacuation in a Erwin hotel before moving their base of operations to the police training center on the lower level of the Erwin Town Hall building on Monday.

County Mayor Garland “Bubba” Evely said Wednesday town officials have indicated the EMS staff and ambulances may remain at town hall for another two weeks if necessary.

Evely said Erwin Mayor Doris Hensley is also assisting the county in its attempt to expedite a meeting with the board of directors of the former Unicoi County Memorial Hospital to discuss the possibility of leasing space at the former hospital for a new EMS station.

County commissioners and WC/JC EMS officials toured a three-bay maintenance building and two adjacent suites of offices and residential space at the hospital in June.

The property is currently leased by the Christian Care Center of Unicoi County and Evely said a county lease arrangement could involve a sublease from Christian Care or a direct lease from the hospital board.

Evely and County Attorney Doug Shults are also engaged in lease negotiations with the owner of the current station house on North Main Avenue.

County commissioners tabled their discussion of the \$1,800 monthly lease on North Main property until their next meeting on Aug. 26 in hopes of moving forward with a lease arrangement on the hospital property.