



City Council

Community Court Update and Grant Award Announcement

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Title

Community Court Update and Grant Award Announcement

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Recognize the Community Court Grant Award from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Report

Issue:

Whether to receive a presentation on an update on the Community Court Program and the Grant Award from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Staff Contact:

Maryam Olson, Court Administrator, Court 360.709.2783

Diane Whaley, Community Court Executive/Public Defense Coordinator, 360.753.8057

Presenter(s):

Scott Ahlf, Municipal Court Judge

Diane Whaley, Community Court Executive/Public Defense Coordinator

Bryanna Pinkston, Assistant City Prosecutor

Background and Analysis:

Olympia Community Court has been chosen as one of eight courts in the nation to receive a community court grant. The U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance chose 8 courts to receive grant funding to establish or enhance community courts and to support community court grantees and practitioners in developing effective responses to low-level, nonviolent offenses.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) FY20 National Community Courts Site-based and Training and Technical Assistance Initiative supports efforts by state, local, and federally recognized Indian

tribal governments to establish and enhance community courts in their jurisdictions.

Community courts enhance public safety by addressing underlying issues that lead to criminal behavior, including substance abuse and behavioral health issues. By engaging communities in planning and operational processes, they provide justice system officials with more effective options in dealing with lower-level offenses, enhance public trust in the conduct of justice, and help to reduce unnecessary incarceration.

Olympia was chosen for an Enhancement Grant in the amount of \$400,000. Funding will be used for housing services, mental health/drug and alcohol services, increased case management, and peacemaking training. The total amount awarded to all 8 jurisdictions collectively = \$2,627,845. Awards were given to Albany Works! Community Court \$400,000, Center for Court Innovation: National Community Court Initiative \$600,000, City of Boulder Municipal Court Community Court \$400,000, Law Vegas Justice Court Community Court Enhancement Project \$79,387, Olympia Community Court Enhancement \$400,000, Reno Municipal Court Community Court \$183,042, Skagit County Community Court Implementation \$399,368, and Spokane Community Court Expansion \$166,048.

Olympia Community Court “soft launched” on January 6, 2016 and fully launched on January 4, 2017 with a celebratory ribbon cutting, after a year of development.

In 2016, Olympia was selected as one of ten sites by the Center for Court Innovation to receive a \$200,000 Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance grant over the course of two years from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2018.

With the passage of the public safety levy, Olympia has been able to sustain this program. From the levy, \$125,000 per year has been allocated to Community Court.

Community Court operates each Wednesday and provides an opportunity for criminal defendants charged with low level offenses in the City to immediately link to social services. Links occurred on-site in the Community Court Provider Building pre-Covid and now occur via Zoom. Participants can get their case dismissed if they are successful in the program. By providing an immediate link and an individualized plan, the goal is to stabilize the defendant so that they can become self-sufficient. The ultimate goals of Community Court are to break the cycle of low-level offending, hold offenders accountable through visible restitution, and increase public safety and trust.

Since its inception, Community Court has opted in 443 defendants and has had 194 graduates. Of those that have graduated between 2016 to present, 81% have not reoffended (i.e. not been convicted of new crimes).

The following Community Court core team members are available for questions: Scott Ahlf, Municipal Court Judge; Diane Whaley, Community Court Executive/Public Defense Coordinator; and Bryanna Pinkston, Assistant City Prosecutor.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Public Safety

Options:

1. Receive the briefing.

2. Do not receive the briefing.

Financial Impact:

N/A

Attachments:

Quick Facts

Court Policy

Brochure

Article