



## City Council

### Artesian Commons Update

**Agenda Date:** 4/17/2018  
**Agenda Item Number:** 2.A  
**File Number:** 18-0382

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**Type:** study session **Version:** 1 **Status:** Filed

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**Title**

Artesian Commons Update

**Recommended Action**

**Committee Recommendation:**

Not referred to a committee.

**City Manager Recommendation:**

Receive the report, and provide feedback and direction for staff regarding the identified policy questions.

**Report**

**Issue:**

Whether to receive a summary of the park history and a status update regarding the Artesian Commons.

**Staff Contact:**

Paul Simmons, Director, Parks, Arts & Recreation Department, 360.753.8462

**Presenter(s):**

Paul Simmons, Director, Parks, Arts & Recreation Department, 360.753.8462

**Background and Analysis:**

The Artesian Commons property was initially purchased by the City of Olympia in 2010 with two primary purposes: to protect the last remaining publicly accessible Artesian Well, and to provide overflow parking for City Hall. Subsequently, following a "Project for Public Spaces" workshop in 2011, the property was designated as a future park. The hope at the time was to discourage negative behaviors on the property by introducing new positive behaviors.

After several months of ongoing community meetings, the park opened in the spring of 2014. Although the design budget was limited, the vision and hope for the park was that it would become a food truck destination with community groups using the space for events and activities. Unfortunately, that vision never fully materialized, and the park has continued to struggle with a presence of drug dealing, substance abuse, and aggressive and violent behaviors.

Each year the Parks, Arts, and Recreation Department has continued to make investments in the evolving design of the park, increased levels of maintenance, and has continued to increase programming in the space. In 2016, the Ranger and Well Host positions were introduced to provide a positive presence in the park. The City has also invested in ongoing programs at the park, most notably contracting with The Bridge Music Program to host a summer concert series.

The Artesian Commons has become a gathering place for many community members who do not have many other places in the community where they feel welcome. The park has also served as the location for several events such as Youth Count, National Night Out, and multiple skateboard events. It has also organically served as a place to hold multiple community vigils.

The Artesian Commons Park demonstrated progress in 2016, but then regressed in 2017 in terms of illegal and negative behaviors. As we look to 2018, we have expanded the Well Host and Ranger positions to 10-hour days, 7 days a week, and 7 months of the year. There are also expanded services provided beyond the park in that the Community Care Center is now open and Rosie's Place has expanded to include some evening hours.

With lessons-learned from four full years of operation, the purpose of this study session is to provide an opportunity for the City Council to consider a variety of policy questions, and provide feedback and direction to staff. Below are the policy questions for consideration -

- What are the current community needs being met by providing this park?
- Is the City committed to continuing to provide a park of this type for the current user group?
- Is this the best location? Could those needs be met better and more effectively in another space? Are there other options?
- Is the space too small and constrained? What does it physically allow?
- Would the City consider selling the park site for redevelopment? If so, how does the well factor into the discussion?
- How do we define success?

**Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):**

The Artesian Leadership Committee was formed in April of 2015, and meets monthly to provide ongoing feedback regarding the management and oversight of the Artesian Commons. This group includes representatives from neighboring property owners, Community Youth Services, Downtown Ambassadors, Olympia Police Department, Parking and Business Improvement Area, Olympia Downtown Alliance, Downtown Liaison, City Council, PRAC Representative, PB&J Project, and various staff from the Parks, Arts & Recreation Department.

**Options:**

1. Receive the report and provide general direction for staff regarding City Council expectations for Artesian Commons.
2. Receive the report and request additional information from staff.

**Financial Impact:**

None

**Attachments:**

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PowerPoint Presentation