



Where Life is Sweet

Mayor and Members of the City Council
STAFF REPORT
For the Meeting of October 28, 2024

Title/Subject

BJA FY24 National Community Court Grant Award Acceptance

Summary and Background

During the 2023 City Council Goal Planning, one of the objectives for a Safe & Healthy Community was to explore the possibility of a Community Court. Court Administrator Viles has been actively working on this possibility including applying for a Federal Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant to help launch a Community Court. The City of Hermiston was awarded one of these grants. Along with the grant funding the Court will receive support and assistance from the Center from Court Innovations and other Community Courts as we launch our program.

Community Court Programs help connect offenders of quality-of-life crimes (e.g. theft, criminal trespass, criminal mischief, unlawful camping) connect with social services to help break the cycle of recidivism. Community Courts also leverage agency partnerships to bring the services to the offenders instead of waiting for the offenders to seek the services. We are hoping to partner with Community Counseling Solutions, COPES, Stepping Stones Alliance and possibly other providers.

The Municipal Court is optimistic that the Community Court model will help those in our community struggling with homelessness, substance use, mental health issues and are criminal justice involved. The Program will accept referrals from the Hermiston Police Department and City Prosecutor for individuals cited with committing an eligible misdemeanor or city ordinance violation. The Hermiston Community Court will provide judicial supervision and accountability while simultaneously providing support and encouragement for individuals to engage in treatment and social services. The Program will primarily be pre-adjudication with cases being stayed to allow the participants to engage in services and complete their case plan. Upon successful completion, the underlying offense will be dismissed.

The Hermiston Community Court Program is in the planning stage. Our plan will need to be reviewed by the Bureau of Justice Assistance before we can begin. We are requesting City Council approve acceptance of the grant so we can move forward in the planning process.

Tie-In to Council Goals

As mentioned in the councils adopted 2023 Goals Task 2.3 was to Develop a plan, gather data, and explore partnerships for a community court program.

Livability- The Community Court Program will not only improve the lives of the citizens that participate in the Program but will work to create a safer community for all residents.

Partnerships- The Community Court Program will partner with local agencies and organizations to help provide the services and connections needed for participants.

Fiscal Prudence- By utilizing a federal grant, it gives the City an opportunity to try the Program for 4 years without bearing the full financial burden of implementing the Program.

Fiscal Information

The BJA Grant is for \$500,000 over 4 years. It requires a 25% match. This match will be met with in-kind match of Court Staff and Judge time in the amounts already being budgeted for.

Alternatives and Recommendation

Alternatives

- Decline BJA Community Court program grant
- Approve acceptance of BJA Community Court program grant

Recommended Action/Motion

Motion to accept BJA Community Court program grant.

Submitted By:

Jillian Viles, Court Administrator

Byron Smith, City Manager