



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Sara L. Hensley, CPRP, Director  
Austin Parks and Recreation Department

**DATE:** July 8, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Barton Springs Pool – Informal Full Moon Parties

---

Historically, the Barton Springs “Full Moon Party” was an informal gathering of community members in celebration of nature. The original full moon informal gatherings began with an index sized community member posting in the window of Barton Spring Pool inviting community members to participate in a potluck picnic followed by a full moon swim. The original gatherings were family friendly and community oriented.

In the recent years, the Barton Springs “Full Moon Party” (an informal event) has been influenced by social media (meetup, facebook, etc.), local business exploitation and the general increase in Austin area population. These influences have transformed the original family friendly full moon party concept into a young adult party environment producing large numbers of boisterous party goers who have demonstrated a lack of concern for personal or public safety.

The most recent full-moon informal party occurred June 21, 2016 where lifeguards at Barton Springs experienced and reported the following:

- Attendance in upwards of 2500 individuals; a large number displaying risky behaviors (shallow water diving, inappropriate use of diving board, etc.) without regard to verbal requests to discontinue the behaviors
- Consumption of alcohol, smoking, and illegal drug use was prolific
- Howling at the moon decibel levels severely impacted the lifeguards ability to hear radio requests for assistance
- Obstructed walkways impeding the lifeguards ability to respond to emergencies
- Inability to effectively clear the pool at closing time in part due to sheer numbers and in part due to the crowds general disregard for authority

In summary, as described by a team of lifeguards on duty June 21st, “no U.S. aquatic industry professional who witnesses this maelstrom of hazardous conditions and anarchy could possibly think that Barton Springs is a safe facility for swimmers.” The above described event created a public safety issue.

In response to this now known public safety issue, the Parks and Recreation Department and APD Park Police convened to generate a specific response and logistical plan for future informal “Full Moon Parties” at Barton Springs Pool. This response includes **creating a formal Barton Springs Pool Full Moon Event**. Like many formal events expecting large numbers, this event will include:

- an entry fee to be implemented for the full time the pool is open, eliminating free entry to Barton Springs Pool after 9 pm just for the full-moon day
- hiring law enforcement to assist with crowd control
- post event evaluation to determine opportunities to improve

The Department fully comprehends the importance of preserving the integrity of a historical event and is working to balance the nostalgia of the past event with the current public safety concerns associated with the event’s evolution. As such, the Department will reach out to stakeholders associated with the historical community event; current Barton Springs Pool/Environmental support groups; Mayor and Council via memo; and advertise the formal event to the community beginning July 11, 2016.

The Department believes the immediate actions are both absolutely necessary and tempered. A post event evaluation will allow for additional modifications to be implemented to ensure the optimal balance is obtained. It is our desire to promote the continued enjoyment of nature, community, history and the mystic of the full moon.

Should you have any questions, please contact Kimberly McNeely, Assistant Director, at (512) 974-6722 or [kimberly.mcneelely@austintexas.gov](mailto:kimberly.mcneelely@austintexas.gov).

Cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager  
Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager  
Kimberly McNeely, Assistant Director, Austin Parks and Recreation Department  
Robert Hightower, Lieutenant, Austin Police Department