



Agenda Item

Park Planning and Community Events Commission

Item #: 4.2.

1/20/2026

File #: 26-0034

TO: Chair and Members of the Park Planning & Community Events Commission

THRU: Leslie Hardy, Community and Library Services Director

FROM: Emily Bustamante, Community Services Assistant Director

1. SUBJECT

Recommendation for Celebration in the Park on July 3, 2026 in connection with the USA250 initiative

2. SUMMARY

Recommendation regarding the proposed USA 250 - Celebration in the Park at Hart Park, a free family-friendly celebration that activates existing park amenities and collaborates with local-nonprofit organizations to assist with implementation on select components.

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Recommend the proposed event for City Council consideration.

4. FISCAL IMPACT

None.

5. STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Goal 3.7 Continue to offer high quality and efficient, city led recreation programs.

6. DISCUSSION AND BACKGROUND

In preparation for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, also known as the Semiquincentennial (USA250), the City Council directed staff in March 2025 to collaborate with the Park Planning and Community Events Commission (Commission) to develop a plan to commemorate this milestone in the City of Orange. At its May 2025 meeting, the Commission established a Semiquincentennial Subcommittee consisting of Chair Kushon, Commissioner Freeman, and Commissioner Litwin. The Subcommittee adopted a decentralized approach that encourages community partners, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses to incorporate the USA250 theme into their existing programming. To support this effort, information about the initiative, along with a calendar of related events occurring throughout the Orange community, has been made available on the City's website. Commission input was discussed at the September 2025 meeting, and subsequent updates have been provided on an ongoing basis.

At the October 2025 Commission meeting, the Commission provided feedback on a re-imagined July 3rd event concept aligned with USA250 as part of the broader Semiquincentennial initiative. At that

time, the Commission also appointed Chair Kushon and Commissioner Romero to serve on a fundraising subcommittee to support the event during Fiscal Year 2025-26.

As previously discussed with the Commission, the proposed event-now titled *Celebration in the Park at Hart Park*-is envisioned as a free, family-friendly community gathering to be held on July 3, 2026. The event is designed to activate existing park amenities while requiring minimal staffing from Police, Fire, Public Works, and Community Services. The concept emphasizes community connection, collaboration with local nonprofit organizations, and fiscal responsibility. Planned elements include live music, a small patriotic ceremony commemorating the Semiquincentennial, and use of existing Hart Park amenities throughout the day, such as swimming at the Hart Park Pool, pickleball, softball, and other recreational activities.

Following the elimination of funding for City-led special events in 2024 and reductions in staffing levels, this approach leverages existing park resources to create a welcoming community experience without the high operational costs associated with a fully enclosed, ticketed event featuring large-scale musical performances and fireworks. In addition, the event concept relies on partnerships with local nonprofit organizations to assist with select implementation components, as Community Services staffing resources for day-of-event support are currently limited.

The proposed event does not include a commercial-grade fireworks display. The cost, space, staffing, and safety requirements associated with such a display were determined to be prohibitive given current budget and staffing constraints. This approach is further supported by the continued allowance of Safe and Sane Fireworks sales within the City.

The fundraising subcommittee has established a goal of securing approximately \$35,000 in sponsorship funding to fully support the event. In coordination with staff, a tiered sponsorship program has been developed, with contribution levels ranging from \$500 to \$20,000. Full funding is required in order to proceed with the event. While written updates have been provided to the Commission and City Council over the past several months, questions have arisen regarding the proposal. This report is clarify those questions and formally present the *Celebration in the Park at Hart Park* event proposal for City Council consideration.

7. ATTACHMENTS

- None