

January 20, 2026

Park Planning and Community Events Commission

Meeting

Public Comment

To: Park Planning & Community Events Commission / Community Services Staff
From: Commissioner Adam Litwin
Date: January 20, 2026
Subject: Written Statement for Inclusion in Meeting Record – January 20, 2026

Good evening Chair, Commissioners, and staff,

Unfortunately, I'm unable to attend tonight's meeting, but I wanted to submit the following comments for the record and for consideration during the meeting.

Item 3.1 – Approval of Minutes (October 21, 2025)

I have reviewed the minutes and support approval as presented.

Item 4.1 – Selection of Commission Officers

I would like to formally nominate James Kushon to serve as Chair.

James did an outstanding job in 2025 supporting parks and community events during one of the most difficult years we've faced. He showed up consistently, supported subcommittees, made himself available outside of meetings, and stayed focused on keeping this commission relevant and effective during major change. His leadership has been steady, collaborative, and grounded in service to the community. I believe he brings the experience, heart, and work ethic needed to lead us through the year ahead.

Item 4.2 – Direction for Celebration in the Park / USA250

I appreciate the creativity and effort that has gone into thinking about how to keep community celebration alive during a year with major financial constraints. Finding ways to honor both tradition and change is not easy, and I truly respect the work staff and commissioners are doing to navigate that balance.

Orange has a long and meaningful tradition of celebrating July 3rd with a large, citywide event that families recognize and plan for year after year. That tradition is deeply connected to community identity. With this year's budget cuts placing that event on hold, I think this moment gives us an opportunity to explore not just what we can replace, but how we can possibly restore what the community loves most.

As we discuss “Celebration in the Park” tied to the 250th anniversary, I believe clarity and connection to tradition will be critical. Whatever we move forward with should be easy for the public to understand and immediately connect to what they already know and value. My hope is that our direction strengthens—not blurs—the identity of July 3rd in Orange.

I would like to propose a community-powered approach.

Let’s bring together local nonprofits, service clubs, faith groups, youth organizations, and community partners for a large collaborative meeting. Let’s clearly share the challenge, explain what is at risk, and invite the community to be part of the solution. If funding is the obstacle, let’s see what is possible through partnerships and grassroots fundraising. If staffing is the obstacle, let’s explore how volunteers and partner organizations might responsibly support the event structure alongside staff.

This city deserves a true July 3rd celebration. It is more than a single event—it is a tradition families build memories around. If there is any realistic path to bringing it back through collaboration, creativity, and shared ownership, I believe it is worth pursuing with everything we have.

If that effort ultimately is not feasible, then we move forward thoughtfully with a new concept that is clearly defined and well-communicated to the public so expectations are set honestly and positively. But my hope is that before we move away from July 3rd, we give the community a chance to help carry it forward.

I believe this approach honors our history, respects our present limitations, and invites our community to shape the future together.

Thank you to staff for continuing to move important work forward during extremely difficult constraints, and thank you to my fellow commissioners for caring deeply about parks, events, and the heart of this community.

Respectfully,
Adam Litwin
Commissioner, Park Planning & Community Events Commission