Park Planning and Community Events

September 16, 2025

Supplemental Materials provided by Commissioners

To: Chair James Kushon
Re: Written Comments for September 16, 2025 Commission Meeting

Hi James,

Since I can't be at the meeting, I'd appreciate it if you could read these comments into the record on my behalf.

Item 4.1 – Capital Improvement Project Planning

I want to start by saying how important it is that we keep our focus on the basics — the things our community uses every single day.

Playgrounds are at the top of that list. They're some of the most used amenities in our parks, and honestly, many of them are old and antiquated. Replacement isn't just nice to have, it's overdue. I'd love to see us take a look at what's being done in South County cities and also Santa Ana's new playgrounds — there are a lot of innovative, creative ideas out there. We should plan for our next playgrounds with those models in mind. And I think it's worth exploring a partnership with KaBOOM! — they've helped other cities save money and resources while still building really engaging playgrounds.

Restroom renovations are another thing that can't wait. They're desperately needed. For families, seniors, and everyday park users, these facilities make or break the park experience. We need to move faster on these upgrades.

Trail and fence repairs along Santiago Creek need to be a top priority too — broken, splintering wood is a safety hazard, and it's not something that should sit on the back burner.

For sports courts, I support the resurfacing at El Camino Real Park, and I also support the idea of converting one tennis court into four pickleball courts. Even with the new courts planned at Hart Park, demand is strong, and this would be a smart way to meet it.

As for the Veterans Park fountain — I understand the symbolism, but I'd keep it lower on the list until we tackle the more urgent needs like playgrounds, restrooms, trails, and courts.

Item 4.2 – USA250-Orange Planning

I think the decentralized approach is the right way to go. We don't have unlimited staff or funding, so bringing in partners — nonprofits, schools, churches, service clubs, and businesses — is the best way to make this celebration meaningful.

I like the ideas already on the table, from Kiwanis, the Community Foundation of Orange, and also contributions from the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR). A Liberty Tree planting, history programming at the library, and similar efforts are exactly the kind of community contributions that make the 250th feel like a shared milestone.

I also want to bring back the idea of installing a commemorative park bench. It would give us a permanent marker of the anniversary, and I think we should tie it to an event. Even something modest could work — invite Council and the Mayor, cut a cake, maybe have the Sons of the American Revolution in costume, play some colonial music, take photos, and share a story about the 250th. It doesn't have to be big to feel special.

On visibility, I support the idea of a commemorative t-shirt presale and would also suggest banners on the Plaza, patriotic shop displays, and tie-ins with existing events like July 3rd, Treats in the Streets, and the Tree Lighting. And I don't want us to miss the chance to highlight Alfred Beck Chapman's Revolutionary ancestry — it's a unique part of Orange's story.

Special Events Update

One last thing — I'd like staff to provide an update on the status of our special events. We all know many were cancelled, but some are slowly being brought back by other groups. I'd like to know what outreach the City is doing to nonprofits and community organizations to see if they'll step up and take on events that are still missing, like Veterans Day, July 3rd, and Movies in the Park.

Thanks for reading this into the record, James, and thanks to everyone for considering these points.

Respectfully,
Adam Litwin

Orange Accords

Update & Introduction (Presented on behalf of Chair James Kushon)

1. Introduction of Concept

- This is the first formal introduction of the **Orange Accords** to the Commission.
- The Mayor is currently the only City official who has been briefed prior to this.
- The goal: Establish a yearlong civic and cultural exchange with Orange Township, New Jersey, as part of the United States' 250th anniversary in 2026.

2. Historical Foundation

- What is now **Orange Township, NJ**, was originally part of the **Newark Mountains region** of the New Jersey Colony.
- **Rev. Jedediah Chapman** was the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in the region and a key figure in the **Revolutionary movement**.
- He played a central role in renaming the area — first to **Orangedale**, and eventually to **Orange**.
- His **great-grandson, Alfred Beck Chapman**, later co-founded **Orange, California**.
- This creates a **singular historic linkage** between the two cities — a shared bloodline and a shared name, rooted in two different founding stories: one revolutionary, one colonial frontier.

3. Outreach and Early Response

- A preliminary outreach has been made to the leadership of **Orange Township, NJ**.
- The idea is currently being reviewed internally by their staff.
- The introduction was creative and historical in tone, followed by a formal clarification of the civic and cultural proposal.

4. Expanding the Vision

- There's potential to **include all of the "Oranges"** as they existed around **1780**, when the original renaming occurred.
  - This includes **East, West, and South Orange** — now distinct municipalities, but once part of the same historical origin.
- Including the broader family of municipalities helps align the **population size and demographic diversity** with Orange, CA, making for a more equitable and dynamic exchange.

5. Strategic Opportunity

- This may be one of the only instances in the country where:
  - Two cities named Orange, on opposite sides of the continent,
  - Founded by **direct descendants in the same family line**,
  - Can tell **parallel founding stories** of America: one born of **revolution**, the other of **mission and land claim**.
- If executed well, this could bring **significant positive attention** and unique cultural pride to all participating!