



Agenda Item

Park Planning and Community Events Commission

Item #: 4.2.

9/16/2025

File #: 25-0523

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**

USA250-Orange Planning Update & Request for Input

2. **SUMMARY**

In preparation for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, also referred to as the “Semiquincentennial,” the City Council directed staff to work with the Park Planning and Community Events Commission to develop a plan to commemorate this historic milestone in the City of Orange; as such, a Semiquincentennial Subcommittee was formed. The Subcommittee has pursued a decentralized approach that encourages community partners, non-profit organizations, and businesses to incorporate the Semiquincentennial theme into their existing programming and is seeking the Park Planning and Community Events Commission’s input.

3. **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Provide input on potential opportunities, partnerships, and priorities to guide further planning for the City’s recognition of the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026.

4. **FISCAL IMPACT**

None.

5. **STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

Goal 3: Enhance public communication strategy and quality of life.

Goal 6: Ensure the preservation of historic resources.

6. **DISCUSSION AND BACKGROUND**

The year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the United States. In anticipation of this national milestone, communities across the country are preparing to recognize and commemorate the Semiquincentennial through educational activities and initiatives that reflect local history, civic pride, and shared American values.

At its May 20, 2025 meeting, the Park Planning and Community Events Commission (Commission) selected Chair Kushon, Vice Chair Freeman, and Commissioner Litwin to participate in a Semiquincentennial Subcommittee (Subcommittee) to explore ways the City of Orange could

recognize and celebrate the 250th anniversary of our nation's independence in 2026.

Given limited staffing and financial resources, the Subcommittee has pursued a decentralized approach that encourages community partners, non-profit organizations, and businesses to incorporate the Semiquincentennial theme into their existing programming.

Since planning began in June 2025, interest in the 250th anniversary has begun to grow among local organizations. This includes interest from the Kiwanis Club of Orange who has submitted a letter of intent to host future Summer Concerts in the Park and is considering adopting an Americana theme for its July 2026 concert, as well as the Community Foundation of Orange who has engaged in preliminary discussions to subtly integrate the 250th into its annual Field of Valor event in November. The Sons of the American Revolution have offered to donate and plant a Liberty Tree and the Daughters of the American Revolution have expressed interest in hosting a community event at the Orange Public Library and History Center, highlighting local Revolutionary War history and civic engagement.

In addition to planning partnerships, research into local history uncovered that Alfred Beck Chapman, one of Orange's co-founders, was the great-grandson of Rev. Jedediah Chapman, a Revolutionary-era figure from present-day Orange, New Jersey. This genealogical connection presents a unique opportunity to highlight Orange's historic ties to the era of American independence.

Lastly, the option to pre-sell a special t-shirt commemorating the anniversary to raise awareness of the anniversary while also raising funds to support 250th efforts was also discussed.

At this time, the Commission is being asked to provide input on the Subcommittee's identification of opportunities for community engagement and participation in the 250th and to help shape the scope and vision for Semiquincentennial activities in the City of Orange.

7. ATTACHMENTS

- None