



Agenda Item

Park Planning and Community Events Commission

Item #: 4.2.

10/21/2025

File #: 25-0590

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

THRU: Leslie Hardy, Community and Library Services Director

FROM: Emily Bustamante, Community Services Assistant Director

1. SUBJECT

2026 3rd of July Celebration

2. SUMMARY

Consideration of a financially feasible re-imagined 3rd of July Celebration in connection with the celebration of the USA250 in 2026.

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Review and provide feedback on the proposed 3rd of July event concept.
2. Select up to three Park Planning and Community Events Commissioners to serve on a 3rd of July Celebration Fundraising Subcommittee.

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

Background

On June 25, 2024, the City Council voted to cancel all future special events after July 4, 2024 and funding was eliminated due to budget challenges. On June 28, 2024, Council authorized the continuation of special events on an individual basis if the City received full sponsorships for the event. As a result, the remaining 2024 Concerts in the Park were sponsored by a local business, Treats in the Streets was sponsored and put on by a local non-profit group, and the Tree Lighting event was sponsored by a non-profit and implemented by City staff. Furthermore, in 2025, with no budget for events and reductions in staffing, the 2025 3rd of July event was cancelled, and Concerts in the Park, Treats in the Streets, and Tree Lighting received commitments from local non-profit groups for funding and implementation for multiple years.

3rd of July Celebration

For many years, the City of Orange has hosted a large-scale 3rd of July Celebration featuring live patriotic music, fireworks, and ticketed admission. While the event has been well-attended, it has become increasingly cost-prohibitive due to rising expenses associated with fireworks, audio/visual services, safety measures, venue and road closures, and staff resources required to manage logistics, safety, ticketing, and crowd control.

In connection with the celebration of the nation's 250th birthday, Park Planning and Community Events Commission (Commission) is being asked to provide feedback on a proposed re-imagined 3rd of July that emphasizes community connection, collaboration with local non-profit groups, and is fiscally feasible.

The new concept envisions a free, family-friendly "Semiquincentennial Celebration in the Park" at Hart Park, that could potentially feature:

- A live concert in the park with local or regional performers.
- A Mayor's welcome and small patriotic recognition ceremony honoring the nation's independence and 250th birthday.
- A "Movie in the Park" screening following the concert.
- Activation of existing Hart Park amenities throughout the day such as swimming at Hart Park Pool, pickleball, softball, and other recreational activities.

This approach leverages existing park resources and amenities and creates a welcoming community atmosphere without the high operational costs of a fully enclosed and ticketed event. Given the lack of funding available, the City could explore partnering with local non-profits on the implementation of certain components such as the concert and movie. Other costs associated with the event would need to be covered through funding received through outside sponsorship. Should the Commission consider this model, they are being asked to select up to three Commissioners to form a 3rd of July Celebration Fundraising subcommittee for the purpose of identifying and coordinating with potential sponsors of the event. The subcommittee would be active through July 3, 2026.

7. ATTACHMENTS

- None