



STAFF REPORT

City Council

Meeting Date: 2/13/2024

Staff Report Number: 24-029-CC

Informational Item: Update on City-hosted community events planned in 2024

Recommendation

City staff recommends that City Council receive and file this informational report containing updates on City-hosted community events planned in 2024.

Policy Issues

City Council sets policy and goals and provides direction to staff regarding municipal projects and services to the Menlo Park community.

Background

On Sept. 20, 2022, City Council held a study session and provided direction for city hosted events and observances in the context of the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic (Attachment A). The City Council direction included that the City restore all events held pre-pandemic (e.g., breakfast with Santa and the 2022 Halloween parade downtown and festival at Burgess Park), leverage existing and new partnerships, adding more events, returning an item for a budget to support events led by community groups, and the City retaining a leading role and allowing other organizations and agencies to have a support role in community events.

Analysis

Schedule of planned community events in 2024

A schedule of community events planned in 2024 is provided in Attachment B. Summary updates on planned events are provided below. This report is focused on larger-scale recurring annual events or event series that are intended for a citywide audience and are typically associated with widely celebrated holidays, civic observances, youth initiatives and local traditions. In addition to the larger-scale community events listed in this report, the City organizes numerous smaller-scale events and programs throughout the year, such as library programs, public safety programs and other audience-specific events that are too numerous to list. These smaller-scale events build additional cultural awareness with the diverse population of Menlo Park, and offer a smaller, more intimate experience that some residents prefer to the larger events.

Black Liberation Month Celebration and Youth Poster Exhibition

A community-oriented event celebrating the past, present, and future of Black Americans with a day of education, cultural remembrance, and the presentation of the Youth Poster Exhibition. Notable elements of the event include: paying respect to local heroes of the Belle Haven and nearby communities; inspiring words of strength, triumph and resilience; showcasing local talent; and telling the story of how Black people have risen out of oppression. There is an educational component to teach about the history of the

community and Black people in general. This event also features the Youth Poster Exhibition in which youth from the community have an opportunity to display their artistic talents on themes related to Black Liberation Month.

Egg Hunt, spring festival and citywide treasure hunt

A new twist on the traditional springtime event is planned in 2024 with a new, inclusive spring festival and citywide “treasure hunt.” The event celebrates the start of spring, renewal, the natural world, family and community togetherness. Notable elements of the event include: A citywide “treasure hunt” for eggs and other surprises dispersed throughout City parks; a paper treasure map and a mobile app through which residents can join the treasure hunt, answer local trivia questions, celebrate the treasures they find, post their own photos and videos, and earn points to redeem for prizes. A centerpiece event is a spring festival with family activities, rides on a fire engine, photos with the big bunny, and related attractions planned for Saturday, April 6. In addition, a traditional children’s egg hunt event is tentatively planned at Burgess Park Saturday, March 30 in partnership with Menlo Park Fire Protection District.

Youth Poetry Voices

This event elevates and showcases Menlo Park youth literacy and creative expression by inviting Menlo Park students in grades 2-12 to create original works of poetry on a specific theme. Notable features of the event include: A family-friendly reception to acknowledge students and their poem entries; featured youth poets reading their poems at a City Council meeting with all poetry entrants also receiving recognition; a commemorative printed poetry booklet featuring selected poems and recognizing all entrants; and a City-hosted webpage featuring all poems and poets.

Juneteenth Celebration

Juneteenth is the nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. The event celebrates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement. Menlo Park’s event is co-led with Belle Haven community-based organizations. Notable features of the event include: Local vendors and nonprofits from the community hosting information and locally-created merchandise booths; civic observance and celebration of Juneteenth and its enduring significance in American history; entertainment through poems, songs, and speeches by Bay Area talent; and food and family-friendly activities.

Summer Reading Game

Multiple studies have shown that reading for fun during the summer months helps children retain and improve their reading proficiency when they are away from the classroom and not participating in formal literacy programs. The Summer Reading Game challenges participants to track their reading, discover great books, experience community activities, and earn incentive prizes donated by Friends of Menlo Park Library. Prizes typically include gift cards, books, games, passes to local attractions, and other fun incentives. The Summer Reading Game runs June-August and is open to all ages.

Fourth of July

The 2024 event is envisioned as twin community festivals at Burgess Park and Belle Haven Community Campus, in lieu of a parade down Santa Cruz Avenue during which many downtown businesses are closed for the holiday. Notable features of the twin events include: festive stage entertainment, themed activities for the family, carnival type treats, and open house family swim days at Burgess Pool and Belle Haven Pool.

Summer Concert Series

The summer concert series take place weekly during the peak summer months, alternating between Fremont Park and Kelly Park. Concerts are typically 90 minutes long, and feature local bands selected through an open submission process conducted in winter of each year. The City of Menlo Park provides

stage, sound and promotional support; performers bring the music; and residents bring out their own blankets and chairs. The concerts located in the Belle Haven neighborhood also include mobile food vendors due to the location's relative distance away from the nearest brick-and-mortar restaurants.

National Night Out

In communities and neighborhoods throughout Menlo Park and the nation, neighbors join together in a combined effort to increase crime prevention and awareness; generate support and participation in local neighborhood watch programs; strengthen the partnership between the community and police; and inform criminals that neighborhoods are connected and fighting back. Notable features of the event include: An online registration portal where residents can organize their neighborhood block party events; ride-alongs and visits to block parties by local elected officials; and informational and promotional resources for building strong neighborhood connections.

Community Resource Fair

An engaging and informative resource fair for residents in the Belle Haven neighborhood and Menlo Park overall. Notable features of this event include: Local agencies in the community each reserve a table to provide information and resources to community members; food is provided for event attendees; light entertainment is provided to help create an enjoyable and interactive community atmosphere.

Halloween Hoopla

A precursor to the official start of the holiday season and "shop local" efforts, the Halloween Hoopla event features a family-oriented costume parade down Santa Cruz Avenue with Menlo Park middle school marching bands typically leading the way, followed by a Halloween carnival event at Fremont Park. In addition to the parade, notable features of the event include games, candies, kid-friendly performers and a merchant trick-or-treat in which local merchants offer candy to trick-or-treaters from their storefronts. The Fremont Park event is planned to take place Saturday, Oct. 26. In 2024, City staff is planning a companion Halloween Hoopla event at Belle Haven Community Campus featuring costumes, carnival games and family-friendly trick-or-treating on Halloween itself, Thursday, Oct. 31.

Light Up the Season

A festive gathering to ring in the holiday season and promote "shop local" initiatives for people of all ages and walks of life to enjoy. Notable features of this event traditionally include: family-friendly entertainment; performances by Menlo Park youth; wintry photo opportunities; free hot cocoa; and the lighting of the big evergreen tree. The prominent tree at Fremont Park traditionally used for the December tree lighting is advanced in age and in declining health. To protect the health of this stately old tree, it is not advised to continue the practice of wrapping the tree with string lights. City staff is exploring alternatives for the 2024 Light Up the Season event, including by identifying another tree at Fremont Park that could be wrapped with lights, or by relocating the event to another park with a healthier tree. Other alternatives being evaluated include reimaging the lighting portion of the event as a "Winter Walk of Lights" with ground level lighted features throughout the park, or an aerial drone light show in the sky above the event. Staff also is working to identify a location for a lighted landmark at the Belle Haven Community Campus and/or Kelly Park for December 2024, in lieu of the sycamore tree at Newbridge Street and Willow Road that has been wrapped in lights in recent years. City staff is developing winter lighting options for City Council consideration in the context of the fiscal year 2024-25 operating budget deliberations.

Photos with Santa

Photos with Santa provides a unique experience for children and families to have a casual, fun photo opportunity with the North Pole's most famous inhabitant. Notable features of the event include a continental breakfast, family-friendly winter themed activities, and the opportunity for photos and/or selfies with Santa. Participating families are asked to register a timeslot in advance with a small per person fee.

Event sponsorships and partnerships

City staff is in the process of updating the City's event sponsorship procedure, which sets goals and guidelines for sponsors of community events, including criteria for sponsor recognitions and the process for evaluating sponsorship offers (Attachment C). The policy was reviewed and approved by the City Council Oct. 20, 2015 (Attachment D). City staff is preparing the revised procedure in Attachment C for new review by the Parks and Recreation and subsequently by City Council, tentatively in March and April, respectively. The policy was utilized to support events from 2015 through 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic and the reduction in public gatherings. Now that events are resuming, staff would like to update this policy to allow opportunities for event sponsorship to resume. City staff also is the process of developing criteria for event partnerships, including roles and responsibilities, cost sharing, staff and financial support, desired goal and outcomes for community events, for example: economic development, small business support, showcasing Menlo Park's attributes, community action and volunteerism, and community pride and spirit.

City support for events led by community groups

On Sept. 20, 2022, City Council expressed interest in potentially developing a mini-grant program through which community groups may seek City support for events led by community groups for the community's benefit. A program has not yet been developed due in part to uncertainties in the City's economic outlook, however City staff continue to explore the potential for a program of this intent, and will develop a preliminary proposal for City Council's consideration in the context of the fiscal year 2024-25 budget deliberations.

Impact on City Resources

City-hosted events and observances require outlays of public resources in the form of staff time/effort and out-of-pocket expenditures. Estimated operating expenditures for organizing, promoting and executing city-hosted events in fiscal year 2023-24 are \$170,000, not including an estimated \$70,000 to install holiday lights on large trees in Fremont Park and at the corner of Newbridge Street and Willow Road. Approximately 1,400 staff hours in total staff time and effort are needed to organize and support community events in fiscal year 2023-24. City Council's adopted fiscal year 2023-24 operating budget includes sufficient resources allocated to support these costs. City staff continues to evaluate the cost-benefit of large-scale events such as parades and festivals that carry increased risk and involve substantial investment of city resources in the form of financial outlay, staff capacity, public safety and public works resources.

Environmental Review

This action is not a project within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines §§ 15378 and 15061(b)(3) as it will not result in any direct or indirect physical change in the Environment.

Public Notice

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with the agenda items being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Attachments

- A. Hyperlink – Sept. 20, 2022 Staff Report #22-188-CC:
menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/2/agendas-and-minutes/city-council/2022-meetings/agendas/20220920-city-council-agenda-packet.pdf#page=5

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- B. Calendar of planned events in 2024
- C. Draft revised event sponsorship information
- D. Hyperlink – Oct. 20, 2015 Staff Report #15-147-CC: menlopark.org/DocumentCenter/View/8404/G-1?bidId=

Report prepared by:
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Report reviewed by:
Sean S. Reinhart, Library and Community Services Director

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CALENDAR OF PLANNED COMMUNITY EVENTS IN 2024

| Draft calendar of community events in 2024 | | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Date | Event | Time | Location(s) | Notes |
| Saturday, Feb. 10 | Black Liberation Month celebration | 12pm-2:30pm | Belle Haven Library | |
| Saturday, Mar. 30 | Egg Hunt | Mid-morning | Burgess Park | In partnership with Menlo Fire |
| Saturday, Apr. 6 | Spring festival and citywide treasure hunt | 10am-1pm | Burgess Park / citywide | Citywide treasure / egg hunt in city parks |
| Tuesday, May 21 | Youth Poetry Voices | 6pm | City Council chambers | |
| Jun. thru Aug. | Summer Reading Game | Online and during library open hours | Menlo Park Library / Belle Haven Library | |
| Saturday, Jun. 15 | Juneteenth Celebration | 11am-2pm | Karl E. Clark Park / Belle Haven Community Campus | |
| Thursday, July 4 | 4th of July festival and open house swim | 11am-2pm | Burgess Park and Pool / Belle Haven Community Campus and Belle Haven Pool | Twin festivals and swim open house events in lieu of parade |
| July 10 – Aug. 14 | Summer Concert Series | Wednesdays 6pm-7:30pm | Fremont Park / Kelly Park | Fremont Park on Wednesdays; Kelly Park on Fridays |
| Tuesday, Aug. 6 | National Night Out | Afternoon-early evening | Citywide | |
| September TBD | Community Resource Fair | 10am – 4pm | Belle Haven Community Campus | |
| Saturday, Oct. 26 and Thursday, Oct. 31 | Halloween Hoopla | 10am-1pm | Santa Cruz Ave. and Fremont Park / Belle Haven Community Campus | Parade/festival on Santa Cruz Avenue / Halloween costumes and trick-or-treat at BHCC |
| Friday, Dec. 6 | Light Up the Season | 5:30pm-7pm | Fremont Park / Kelly Park | |
| Saturday, Dec. 14 | Photos with Santa | 8:30am-12:30pm | Arrillaga Recreation Center / Belle Haven Community Campus | Event rotates locations. BHCC in 2024; ARC in 2025 |

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COMMUNITY EVENT SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION

SPONSORING COMMUNITY EVENTS

The City of Menlo Park hosts several significant community events throughout the year that are welcoming and enjoyable for all ages. Community events are designed bring residents together to celebrate, socialize, learn, and play together, continuing treasured traditions while also creating new ones.

BENEFITS OF SPONSORING

Sponsoring a City of Menlo Park event provides the sponsor an unparalleled opportunity to engage community members in a lively and celebratory setting. Sponsoring a City of Menlo Park event is an effective way to showcase your values and your efforts in supporting a vibrant community for all residents of Menlo Park, and the opportunity to connect with a wider audience.

SPONSOR ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Sponsors may be local Menlo Park businesses, non-profit organizations, or individuals that serve incorporated City of Menlo Park residents. Sponsors must demonstrate positive contributions to enhancing the quality of life in Menlo Park for all residents; and show a sincere commitment to promote fairness, justice, equity, and inclusion for all residents of Menlo Park.

EVENT DESCRIPTIONS

[This section will contain brief summaries of sponsorship-eligible community events using information listed on the City of Menlo Park's community events webpage: <https://menlopark.gov/communityevents>. This section also will include information for prospective sponsors about each event such as estimated number of attendees, sponsor recognition opportunities available such as banners, signs, promotional materials, information tables and/or exhibit booths.]

IN-KIND COLLABORATION BY NONPROFITS AND LOCAL SMALL BUSINESS

Local small business and non-profit organizations that serve Menlo Park residents may collaborate with City of Menlo Park community events through in-kind contributions such as skilled volunteer support, community outreach, and providing relevant content or activities at City events. Please contact us for more information about in-kind collaborations.

SPONSORSHIP TIERS

There are three sponsorship tiers based on estimated attendance and the overall scale of the event.

Tier A - Typical event attendance 750 or fewer

- Bronze Sponsor: \$100
- Silver Sponsor: \$250
- Gold Sponsor: \$500

Tier B - Typical event attendance 750 to 1,500

- Bronze Sponsor: \$250
- Silver Sponsor: \$500
- Gold Sponsor: \$750

Tier C - Typical event attendance 1,500 or more

- Bronze Sponsor: \$1,000
- Silver Sponsor: \$2,500
- Gold Sponsor: \$5,000

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COMMUNITY EVENT SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION

| SPONSORSHIP PACKAGE OPTIONS | Bronze Sponsor | Silver Sponsor | Gold Sponsor |
|---|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Your organization's name on marketing and promotional materials including: social media updates, online city calendar, and community calendars. | X | X | X |
| Verbal recognition of sponsorship during the event. A City representative member will recognize your organization's sponsorship by name over the public address system during the event introduction and again at the conclusion. | X | X | X |
| At events that feature display tables/booths, your organization may receive space for a 10x10 display booth to provide handouts, giveaways, and information, subject to event rules. | X | X | X |
| Business logo on distribution of event flyers, postcards, TV ad displays at city buildings and event posters posted throughout Menlo Park. | | X | X |
| At events that include banners or signs, your organization may display a banner or sign during in locations, subject to event rules and only as authorized by the City | | X | X |
| Recognition of your organization's sponsorship City of Menlo Park email newsletters such as the "Library and Community Services news," with over 16,000 weekly local subscribers. | | | X |

PROPOSAL TIMELINE

Sponsorship proposals are accepted throughout the year. Prospective sponsors are strongly encouraged to submit proposals at least six (6) months in advance of the event they propose to sponsor.

OTHER INFORMATION

Depending on sponsor level, sponsors should be prepared to provide the following at the time of submitting a sponsorship proposal:

- A high-resolution logo or artwork to represent the sponsoring organization
- Electronic copy of the company logo.
- Payment: Full payment due at time of signing contract; checks payable to "City of Menlo Park". Your contribution may be tax deductible; consult a qualified tax advisor.

CONTACT INFORMATION

[insert contact information.]