

TO: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

FROM: STEPHANIE DOUGLAS, SUPERINTENDENT OF RECREATION
COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

DATE: OCTOBER 25, 2016

SUBJECT: CITY OF PALO ALTO SPECIAL EVENTS UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

No action to be taken.

BACKGROUND

The City of Palo Alto (City) recognizes the importance of creating community through special events and activities. Events such as our Annual Chili Cook-Off Event, Teen Buoyancy Festival, Community Health Fair and others, bring people together from different backgrounds and different neighborhoods throughout the city. Special events weave the fabric of our community by creating opportunities to interact, celebrate, enrich people's lives, promote inclusiveness, and stretch imaginations. Special events also build family traditions, opportunities to participate, and unique experiences.

It is essential that the City of Palo Alto encourage and support the safe interaction of neighbors, friends, families and strangers through the shared experience of special events. Special events create wonderful memories and provide the bonding that every community needs for economic and emotional growth.

DISCUSSION

The City of Palo Alto Community Services Department hosts several special events that have been long-standing traditions in Palo Alto, such as the May Fete Parade and Fourth of July Chili Cook-Off. New events are added annually and many more involve partnerships with other organizations. The following is a list of events the Community Services Department hosted or partnered with for FY 2015-2016.

Chili Cook-Off – July 2015

Community Health Fair (in partnership with YMCA) - September 2015

Meet the Streets (in partnership with City Manager's Office) – September 2015

Lucie Stern Community Center Bridal Fair – September 2015

Moonlight Run (partnership with Palo Alto Weekly)-September 2015

Veterans Day (in partnership with City Manager's Office) – November 2015

Holiday Tree Lighting – December 2015

Senior New Year's Eve Brunch – December 2015

Mitchell Community Center Anniversary Event (*Frozen* Theme) - January 2016

Summer Camp Registration Extravaganza – February 2016

The Great Race for Saving Water (in partnership with City of Palo Alto Utilities) – April 2016

Bryant Street Garage Fund Grantee Gala – May 2016

May Fete Parade – May 2016

Journey for Veterans Walk (partnership) – May 2016

Teen Buoyancy Festival – June 2016

World Music Day (in partnership with Palo Alto Recreation Foundation) – June 2016

As part of planning for the current fiscal year 2016-2017, the Community Services Department solicited feedback from community members on specific special events they may be interested in attending. Feedback was solicited at the May Fete Parade, Chili Cook-Off Event, online and at our customer service desks at Lucie Stern, Cubberley and Mitchell Park Community Centers from May 2016 through July 2016. Options for future special events included a “Dogtoberfest” Celebration, Memorial Day Observance Event, Kite Flight Festival, Bi-Annual Bridal Fair, Tech Specs Festival and the option for individuals to provide their own ideas for event themes. The survey inquired about respondent’s residency and previous events that they had attended in Palo Alto.

The survey received a total of 564 respondents; with 80% of respondents Palo Alto residents and 20% resided primarily in Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Los Altos and San Jose. Over 70% of respondents indicated that they would like to see a “Dogtoberfest” in the City of Palo Alto. 15% of respondents provided their own event ideas, with the most popular recurring themes suggesting Art, Wine & Food Festivals, Bike or Transportation Expo and Earth Day/Nature themed events. The May Fete Parade, Chili Cook-Off and Moonlight Run were the most highly attended events by the respondents.

Several new events are planned for the current year, including a Bike & Mobility Expo, “Bike and Roll”, which was held on October 2nd, 2016 in partnership with the Annual Bike Palo Alto event. The Expo was held at King Plaza and featured electric bikes that attendees could test ride as well as a variety of alternative transportation vendors and family friendly activities. The event was well received with hundreds in attendance and is expected to continue to be a strong partnership event with Bike Palo Alto.

The City will be hosting a citywide Earth Day Festival on Earth Day (Saturday, April 22nd, 2017). The event will include a 5K Fun Run (formerly known as the “Race To Save Water”), followed by an Earth Day themed festival complete with environmental agency vendors, food trucks, family friendly activities, DJ and entertainment, giveaways and earth themed demos, which may include nature and gardening components.

Lastly, staff is planning a “Dogtoberfest” / Pet Friendly Festival on Saturday, October 21th 2017 which will include dog /pet services vendors, food trucks & dog treats, prizes/giveaways, adoptable dogs/rescues, pet photos, dog demos & training, pet licensing, and other family friendly activities. This event is expected to take place at Mitchell Park Dog Park and surrounding area.