

TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Date: March 11, 2026

To: Chair and Commissioners
From: Lara Brown, Recreation Program Coordinator
Subject: 2025 Holiday Celebration Summary Report

Recommendation:

Receive summary report of the 2025 Holiday Celebration; and provide feedback to Staff for the 2026 Holiday Celebration event.

Background:

For the past 24 years, the Town of Windsor Parks and Recreation Department has hosted a community tree lighting event in the month of December on the Town Green. While some of the elements of the event have changed or been updated over the years, the core activities have remained. In years past, the event included the following elements:

- Horse-Drawn Wagon Rides
- Photos with Santa
- Children's Crafts
- Cookie Decorating
- Food & Gift Vendors
- Hannukkah Menorah Lighting & Dedication
- Live performances by local youth
- Lighting of the tree by Santa & Mrs. Claus
- Charlie Brown Christmas Tree Grove by People 4 Parks

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the department to make changes to the event. These changes included bringing children's crafts and cookie decorating outside, canceling carriage rides and Santa photos, and no longer utilizing indoor spaces like Huerta Gym. Since 2023, the Holiday Celebration has seen typical attendance numbers comparable to and/or exceeding pre-Pandemic attendance. Due to the loosening of COVID-19 restrictions, some activities were brought inside such as Ballet Folklorico performances, a holiday story-time area, and musical performances.

Discussion:

In recent years, staff have received requests from community members to create a more culturally inclusive event experience. Staff sought out direction from the Parks & Recreation Commission in 2023 and moved forward in creating more partnerships with outside organizations for this event. In 2024 Town staff collaborated with the Windsor Chamber of Commerce to implement a Posada Marketplace, where Hispanic vendors were highlighted, celebrated, and patroned by the community. Also, in 2024, the Town received a generous donation from AAction Rentals to cover the cost of the light towers.

2025 Holiday Celebration

The Town of Windsor hosted the 24th Holiday Celebration and Tree Lighting Event (Event) on the Town Green on December 4th, 2025. To continue the goal of creating a more culturally inclusive event

space, staff continued their partnership with the Windsor Chamber of Commerce to implement the Posada marketplace. This market was expanded from the 2024 Event to allow more vendors to participate. The final performance of the night on the main stage was generously sponsored by the Windsor Chamber of Commerce. Mariachi Torres played for the last 30 minutes of the event, and it was very well received by the community. Staff received feedback from community members that they greatly enjoyed Mariachi Torres and felt culturally included in the event.

The Sonoma County Jewish Community Center (JCC) continued their partnership with the Town as they hosted a menorah lighting/dedication during our performances and provided children's activities at their booth. They included other Jewish organizations such as Congregation Beth Ami, Congregation Ner Shalom, and the Jewish Federation Bay Area. Common Ground Society is a local Sonoma County nonprofit dedicated to disability advocacy and inclusion, and they hosted a calming tent at the event that included comfy seating, soft music, noise-cancelling headphones, fidgets for sensory calming, and helpful volunteers trained to work with people of all abilities. By including the calming tent, the Town provided a space for people with disabilities and neurodivergent needs a space to enjoy the event while also providing reprieve from an overstimulating environment.

To reduce costs, cookie decorating was moved back into Huerta Gym, reducing the number of tents rented. A new backstage line up system was also implemented which decreased the number of children unaccounted for after their performances and ensured a parent/guardian was there to pick them up from backstage.

The Town of Windsor partners with the Windsor Certified Farmers Market to plan and organize the food and craft vendors on Market Street. The Market has continued their "world market" theme, showcasing and selling the types of food and snacks traditionally consumed in different customs and cultures around the world during the December holiday season.

Town staff also collaborated with SMART this year to ensure there was a late pickup from Windsor scheduled for the end of the Holiday Celebration. Ridership was estimated at 126 people. Staff will continue to encourage more ridership in future years, as confirmation of this extra pickup time was not finalized until midway into the advertising timeline of Holiday Celebration 2025.

Attendance at the 2025 Holiday Celebration was very well attended and aided by the late SMART pickup. However, it is estimated that attendance numbers did not exceed 2023 or 2024 participants.

Holiday Celebration - Expenses

Due to generous donations and sponsorships along with savings Staff found through event changes, the 2025 Event saw a savings over the previous years. The table on the following page is an overview of the expenses and current total budget for the 2025 Holiday Celebration:

Item	Expense
Sound	\$ 2,500
Rentals/Tents	\$ 9,087.68
Cookie Decorating Supplies	\$ 1,371.68
Light Tower Rentals	N/A - Donated
Children's Craft Supplies	\$ 390.61
Decorations	\$ 134.23
Misc. Supplies/Marketing	\$ 920.99

Security (New)	\$ 682.24
PTS	\$ 1,409.68
Total Budget	\$16,497.68

In review of the 2025 Holiday Celebration event, staff facilitated an internal meeting including members of the Recreation Division and Parks and Facilities Division. In addition, staff solicited input from the Farmers Market and other Town partners including the JCC, Windsor Chamber of Commerce, and SMART who were directly involved with the event.

Staff are prepared and planning to move forward with a similar format in 2026 with slight variations that may include bringing additional non-profit groups and community organizations in to participate and collaborate with. Staff are seeking feedback and recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Commissioners of other local and regional partners to help expand the offerings at the Holiday Celebration event.

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