

CITY OF WARRENVILLE**MEMO**

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Monica Johnson, TAC Chair
CC: Anthony Aguilar, Accountant
Subject: FY 2027 Hotel Tax Grant Award Recommendation
Date: January 6, 2026

OVERVIEW

On behalf of the Tourism and Arts Commission (TAC), I am pleased to present a recommendation for the FY 2027 Hotel Tax Grant Award Program for review. This year, 15 applications were submitted by the required deadline. All 15 of the applications are for similar or recurring events/projects that have been previously recommended for funding by TAC.

Grant requests for the proposed FY 2027 projects totaled \$140,951. After a review of this year's applications, TAC is recommending funding for all 15 projects, with proposed grant awards totaling \$134,614. In comparison to FY26, grant award funding recommendations increased by \$10,886 for the same number of projects. TAC believes the funding of these grants will help Warrentville's organizations provide a variety of events for the enjoyment of residents and out-of-town guests, who, we hope, will again be supporting our local businesses and hotels as they partake in events in the city.

BUDGET

Per Council policy, TAC must make their recommendations within a \$150,000 budget and this recommendation is well within that amount. When applications are submitted, line items for each project's proposed expenses are broken down into four categories: Events, Tourism, Arts, and Capital, which are then totaled across all applications. TAC is asked to ensure that no one funding category be awarded more than 50% of the total hotel grant funding. TAC's FY 2027 recommendation adheres to this policy.

FY 2027 HOTEL TAX APPLICATIONS AND TAC RECOMMENDATIONS

Exhibit 1 lists the proposed projects in the first column. The second column shows a series of numbers starting with the total grant funding request amount, followed by the total recommended grant award, and the grants awarded that applicant in the previous two years, if available. The remaining columns show the breakdown of funding into each of the four funding categories. A detailed narrative about each project is provided in Exhibit 2.

Summarizing TAC's recommendations, the largest grant award would be for Warrentville in Bloom at \$32,565 with Warrentville Park District following at \$24,083 for the Multi-Cultural Festival. The Park District's Art on the Prairie and Warrentville Library District's Concert on the Commons are both being recommended for funding at \$17,288 and \$16,799, respectively, while funding for the Park District's Fall Fest is being recommended at \$13,671. The Historical Society's Community Celebration Banners are recommended for funding at \$5,565, while the remaining nine projects are being recommended for funding at levels below \$5,000.

The Commission finalized its review of the applications at its December 3, 2025, meeting. The following Commission members joined me in attendance: Commissioners Dina, Osborn, and Owens. Also in attendance was Staff Liaison Anthony Aguilar. The Commission unanimously passed a motion recommending funding of the applications in the amounts shown.

Exhibit 1 – Projects

CATEGORICAL BREAK DOWN OF FUNDS					
Project	TOTALS	EVENT	TOURISM	ARTS	CAPITAL
<u>Spring Tea</u>					
Request Total	\$700				
Recommended	\$700	\$350	\$0	\$350	\$0
FY26 Award	\$700	\$350	\$0	\$350	\$0
FY25 Award	\$700	\$350	\$0	\$350	\$0
<u>Albright Inspired Artist-in-Residency</u>					
Request Total	\$2,000				
Recommended	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$0
FY26 Award	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$0
FY25 Award	\$3,500	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$1,500
<u>Paint the Ville</u>					
Request Total	\$1,000				
Recommended	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$0
FY26 Award	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$0
FY25 Award	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$0
<u>Walking (Mobile) Tour</u>					
Request Total	\$3,524				
Recommended	\$3,524	\$2,312	\$1,212	\$0	\$0
FY26 Award	\$2,112	\$2,112	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY25 Award	\$2,112	\$2,112	\$0	\$0	\$0
<u>America 250– Our Story, Our Future</u>					
Request Total	\$3,862				
Recommended	\$3,862	\$1,000	\$0	\$970	\$1,892
<u>Art Program-Community Celebration Banners</u>					
Request Total	\$5,565				
Recommended	\$5,565	\$0	\$0	\$5,565	\$0
CATEGORICAL BREAK DOWN OF FUNDS					
Project	TOTALS	EVENT	TOURISM	ARTS	CAPITAL
<u>Concerts on the Commons</u>					
Request Total	\$21,299				
Recommended	\$16,799	\$0	\$99	\$16,700	\$0

FY26 Award	\$12,746	\$0	\$96	\$12,650	\$0
FY25 Award	\$11,096	\$0	\$96	\$11,000	\$0
<u>Musical Matinees</u>					
Request Total	\$4,399				
Recommended	\$4,399	\$0	\$99	\$4,300	\$0
FY26 Award	\$4,471	\$0	\$96	\$4,375	\$0
FY25 Award	\$3,446	\$0	\$96	\$3,350	\$0
<u>Art on the Prairie</u>					
Request Total	\$17,915				
Recommended	\$17,288	\$5,602	\$3,686	\$8,000	\$0
FY26 Award	\$18,261	\$5,471	\$4,840	\$7,950	\$0
FY25 Award	\$18,430	\$5,848	\$4,672	\$7,910	\$0
<u>Fall Fest</u>					
Request Total	\$13,671				
Recommended	\$13,671	\$8,497	\$504	\$4,380	\$290
FY26 Award	\$12,343	\$7,190	\$557	\$4,080	\$516
FY25 Award	\$11,538	\$7,056	\$557	\$3,400	\$525
<u>Lunchtime Live</u>					
Request Total	\$3,200				
Recommended	\$3,200	\$0	\$250	\$2,950	\$0
FY26 Award	\$3,225	\$0	\$250	\$2,975	\$0
FY25 Award	\$3,275	\$0	\$250	\$3,025	\$0
<u>Movies in the Park</u>					
Request Total	\$1,158				
Recommended	\$1,158	\$1,020	\$100	\$0	\$38
FY26 Award	\$1,801	\$1,560	\$150	\$0	\$91
FY25 Award	\$1,665	\$1,440	\$150	\$0	\$75
<u>Multi-Cultural Festival</u>					
Request Total	\$24,083				
Recommended	\$24,083	\$8,248	\$2,329	\$13,290	\$216
FY26 Award	\$23,336	\$8,329	\$2,183	\$12,540	\$284
FY25 Award	\$20,668	\$7,658	\$2,183	\$10,610	\$217

CATEGORICAL BREAK DOWN OF FUNDS					
Project	TOTALS	EVENTS	TOURISM	ARTS	CAPITAL
<u>WIB</u>					
Request Total	\$33,105				
Recommended	\$32,565	\$3,000	\$1,438	\$0	\$28,127
FY25 Award	\$30,189	\$3,440	\$766	\$0	\$25,983
FY24 Award	\$30,830	\$3,100	\$1,600	\$0	\$26,130
<u>WIB Calendar</u>					
Request Total	\$5,470				
Recommended	\$4,800	\$0	\$4,800	\$0	\$0
FY26 Award	\$4,700	\$0	\$4,700	\$0	\$0
FY25 Award	\$4,500	\$0	\$4,500	\$0	\$0

Exhibit 2 - FY 2026 Grant Application Information

Provided below is a brief description of each project. The projects are listed in the same order as shown in Exhibit 1.

Annual Warrenville Spring Tea

Description: April 2027 will feature the 23rd Annual Spring Tea hosted by the Historical Society, taking place once again at Warrenville's VFW Post 8081. The Tea features a luncheon and includes entertainment that is historic in nature. Warrenville teens are trained in formal dinner service and take on these duties for the guests that day. Warrenville residents invite guests to attend, and on average, a quarter of the attendees are from outside of our city. The event helps to raise funds for college scholarship awards for Warrenville teens.

Attendance: 130; no overnight stays

Albright-Inspired Artist-in-Residency Program

Description: This program began in 2015 to further promote the Warrenville connection to the internationally known Albright family of artists, Adam Emory Albright and his sons, Ivan and Malvin, as well as to expand the Historical Society's offerings beyond their art gallery. Each year, they put out a call for artists, asking each artist for a proposal for the creation of new artwork that will be inspired by one of the three Albright artists. Work by the chosen artist will begin in the fall. Duties will include creating artwork to be displayed at various businesses and public locations, as well as public programming throughout the spring and fall, including a visit to a Warrenville classroom to inspire students with an art project. At least one art piece will become a part of the Warrenville Historical Society's collection.

Attendance: 3000; no overnight stays

Paint the 'Ville Plein Air Painting Competition and Show

Description: The Historical Society is proposing its 7th Plein Air Painting Competition. ("Plein Air" refers to the act of painting subject matter right on site, in outdoor daylight, rather than in the studio from photo or memory.) Interestingly, the idea originated from a suggestion by an America in Bloom judge, who was inspired by Warrenville's Artist-in-Residency program and the Historical Society's tradition for sponsoring art exhibits. Selected artists will paint on as many of the three planned plein air event dates as they'd like, at various locations around Warrenville, and the public will be invited to enjoy the artistic processes on display as they work. Dates will coordinate with the new Warrenville Mercantile in Leone Schmidt Heritage Park for cross-promotion when possible. Paintings from these three dates will be submitted for exhibit at the Historical Museum and Art Gallery in the fall, where the public will be encouraged to vote for the painting that will become part of Warrenville's permanent collection.

Attendance: 1,000 and no overnight stays

Historic Warrenville Mobile Tour

Description: The mobile tour has been active for residents and guests for 13 successful years and continues to engage users by focusing on a variety of topics, including general history, historical architecture, art history, local family history, business history, and topics that are popular in pop culture. For the proposed 14th year, the tour will be rebranded to coincide with Illinois250 – Illinois' component to connect to the America250 commemoration of the events of 1776. During this anniversary year, Warrenville's rich Native American history connections will be highlighted. The early days of Warrenville will also be featured, including the city's ties to the Albright family of artists, and the many links Warrenville has to events outside of our boundaries, such as the Iroquois Theatre Fire and the California Gold Rush. This year, a special historic map will be printed to coincide with the country's 250th anniversary, which will allow non-digital users to participate in the history being shared. The tour is free and can be accessed through the tour's website or by using a smart device throughout Warrenville on the STQRY/OnCell app. Information about this tour platform is shared with local bike shops and places of interest for those who utilize the local trail system. Users, including students and teachers inside their classrooms anywhere in the world, can listen to or read descriptions of specific sites in Warrenville, as well as see associated historical images.

Attendance: 3,500; no overnight stays

Scouts' Program: America250 –Our Story, Our Future

Description: With a focus on engaging the next generation, the Historical Society is developing this collaborative program, which will feature five events across the summer, designed specifically for scout groups. This program plans to provide meaningful opportunities for exploring American history –such as scavenger hunts, historic trail hikes, and the creation of an interactive timeline, while connecting national themes to Warrenville's history. This program will not only introduce young participants to national history but will also empower them to see themselves as part of Warrenville's on-going story.

Attendance: 300 scouts/300 additional public attendees and no overnight stays

Community Celebration Banners

Description: To help mark the national America250 commemoration in the summer of 2026, the Historical Society proposes to partner with the Kostopoulos family, owners of the shopping complex at Route 59 and Batavia Road, to install a rotating banner display across the parking lot. The display will showcase a combination of historic images from the Museum's collection with contemporary photographs from the Historical Society's community photo exhibit. In autumn 2026, the banner exhibit will shift to honor Warrenville's

veterans, highlighting individuals who have served in the armed forces. Together, these two rotating displays will weave Warrenville's local story into both a national commemoration of America's 250th anniversary and a local tribute to community service.

Attendance: 10,000 and no overnight stays

Concerts on the Commons

Description: A series of nine, free, outdoor musical performances on Bob Walters Commons will once again be sponsored by the Warrenville Public Library on Wednesday evenings from mid-June through mid-August. This popular concert series, being proposed for its 18th year, features a wide variety of popular music from rock and pop to country and oldies, and is attended by all age groups from across the western suburbs.

Attendance: Attendance in 2025 averaged 220/concert; no overnight stays

Notes and Restrictions

- Reimbursements cannot be used for guarantees for food trucks

Sunday Musical Matinees

Description: Sunday Musical Matinees is a series of free, live concerts that are held at the Warrenville Public Library. Seven concerts will be held during the season, once a month on Sunday afternoons from September 2026 through March 2027.

Attendance: 50 attendees per concert on average; one overnight stay (out of town performer)

Art on the Prairie Art and Music Festival

Description: This event continues to be a two-day, outdoor Art and Music Festival that features artwork and performing artists hosted by the Warrenville Park District. Art on the Prairie attracts both local and out of town artists for a Juried Art Fair and features ethnic, folk, and jazz musical and/or dance performances. A Paint Station, as well as a face painter and a balloon artist, have become family favorites at this event, as well. Pending approval, wine and microbrew tasting will be available, organized by a local business. The *Many Faces of Warrenville* banner art program will again feature local artists' work on light pole banners celebrating the festival.

Attendance: 1000 estimated; Overnight stays will depend on the artists who participate

Notes and Restrictions

- Reimbursements cannot be used for Park District staffing
- Theatre and Music Performers Line Item can only be used for performers
- Off-Duty Officer expense will not be eligible for reimbursement

Fall Family Fun Fest

Description: Highly popular and family-centered, this annual Park District event includes a costume parade, games and prizes, crafts, live entertainment, inflatables, a petting zoo, beverages, and fresh grilled food for purchase. The event proposed for FY27 will feature a live band, the Headspin Guy, face painters, and balloon artists.

Attendance: 850+ attendees; Overnight stays are unlikely

Notes and Restrictions

- Funds cannot be used for Park District staff

Lunchtime Live

Description: The Park District is proposing to continue this popular and continually growing, free children's summer concert series for an 8th year. The grant would fund four children's entertainers. Rather than spreading performances across the summer as in previous years, events will all be held in June, due to ongoing construction at Cerny Park.

Attendance: 100+ /event and no overnight stays

Notes and Restrictions

- Funds cannot be used for Park District staffing
- Must apply for park rental prior to event(s)

Summer Movies in the Park

Description: The Park District is requesting funding for their 9th Annual Summer Movies in the Park, which is free to the public. Family-friendly movies are projected on a 16' inflatable screen beginning at dusk at Cerny Park one evening per month in June and July. (August movie is not planned for this year, as attendance in past years had dropped off in August, most likely due to school starting.) A local vendor will again be used to provide concessions.

Attendance: 100+ /event and no overnight stays

Notes and Restrictions

- Funds cannot be used for Park District staffing
- Must apply for park rental prior to event(s)

Warrenville Multi-Cultural Festival

Description: The Warrenville Park District's Award-Winning Multi-Cultural Festival, proposing a fifth year in FY27, will continue to celebrate the vibrant cultures that make Warrenville a strong and diverse community. This free event, held outdoors at the City Hall complex, will continue to be a fun afternoon of live performances to encourage social cohesion and inter-community harmony, hoping to enrich our cultural vitality in ways that may impact generations to come. Coloring murals, an international flag display, yard games, and musicians/performing arts acts will all be featured at the event. Attendees will also be treated to the talents of face painters, balloon twisters, and a henna tattoo artist. Food trucks will be available on-site.

Attendance: 1000+ with few to no overnight stays

Notes and Restrictions

- Funds cannot be used for Park District staffing

Warrenville In Bloom Beautification Program

Description: WIB is requesting funds to continue their mission to beautify strategic locations in the community with plants and flowers and to maintain those planters and gardens as long as possible through the summer. The Curb Appeal program acknowledges citizens' efforts with yard signs for lawns that are well cared for and beautified.

Attendance: No overnight stays –beautification of Warrenville can be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike

Notes and Restrictions

- Funds cannot be used for logo notepads (giveaways)

Warrenville In Bloom 2027 Photo Calendar

Description: WIB is requesting funds to print a 2027 version of a calendar featuring color photos. WIB has printed calendars since 2025 using Hotel Tax Grant funds and would like to continue this effort to raise awareness of their mission and to highlight the beauty of nature. The calendars are free to residents at-large while supplies last at various local businesses, schools, medical offices, and municipal buildings. City meetings and events will be accessible with a QR code printed on the calendar.

Notes and Restrictions

- Grant award includes funds for saddle stitching 1000 calendars, which saves \$670 over spiral binding and makes calendars more easily recyclable