



STAFF REPORT 11/12/2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Andrew Simmons, Director of Public Works/City Engineer

SUBJECT: Provide Direction for Selection of 2025 Hometown Heroes Honorees and the Parade Grand Marshal

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is requesting direction from the City Council for the selection of 5 Hometown Hero honorees for 2025.

Staff is recommending that Lee Espinoza be selected as the Grand Marshal to lead the Hometown Hero Honorees in the parade.

BACKGROUND:

The “Hometown Heroes” monument honors individuals or organizations who have made significant contributions to the civic or cultural life of the City of Coachella. Currently, the list of “Hometown Heroes” include the following persons:

1. Cesar Chavez; Civil Rights and Labor Leader
2. Leonila Torres; Community Leader
3. Linda Garza; Government Employee
4. Elvira Acosta Murillo; Community Leader
5. Severio “Cosmo” Lira Jr.; Commitment to Youth
6. Raquel G. Medina; Community Volunteer
7. Rich Ramirez; Educator and Mentor
8. Chauncey Veatch; Educator and Mentor
9. Juan Torres; Entrepreneur and Business Leader
10. Joe and Maria Celia Munoz; Exceptional Citizens
11. Julio Diaz, Antonio Diaz and Joel Diaz; Boxing Family Champions
12. Eugenia Ortiz; Community Leader and Activist
13. Clementine Olloque, Maria Carmona-Marron, Maria Serrano, Maria Munoz; Community Leaders and Activists
14. Organización en California de Lideres Campesinas; Leaders and Community Activists
15. Caballero Family, Boxing Family Champions
16. Chris Romero, Exceptional Citizen
17. Mary Lou Torres, Exceptional Citizen and Advocate
18. Merlyn Hamner, Historian
19. Joe Vega; Postmaster and Exceptional Citizen
20. Lee Espinoza; Coach and Mentor
21. CYSAS La Laja; Youth Sports Leaders
22. Vanessa Madera; Youth Sports Leader
23. Joe Ceja; Educator and Mentor
24. Deputy David Solis; Exceptional Valor
25. Mayor Yolanda R. Coba; Community Leader
26. Enedina Rapan; Community Activist
27. Enedina Rapan, Jesus Mota, Maria Hernandez, Prospero Montes, Jesus Sanchez; Inspirational Community Mentors
28. Gabriela Fundora; Youth Sports Leader
29. Citlalli Ortiz; Youth Sports Leader
30. Cesar Sanchez, Entrepreneur and Business Leader

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| 31. Father Guy Wilson; Religious and Spiritual Leader | 42. Sandra Ramirez; Exceptional Citizen |
| 32. Dr. Juan De Lara; Educator and Mentor | 43. Sebastian Fundora; Exceptional Athlete |
| 33. Juanita Godwin; Community Leader and Youth Mentor | 44. Bonifacio De La Cruz; Battalion Chief Coachella Fire Station No. 79 |
| 34. Raices Cultura; Community Leader and Activists | 45. ASM Eduardo Garcia; Community Advocate and Activist |
| 35. Rosa Lucas – Community Advocate and Activist | 46. Emmanuel Martinez; Community Leader and Activist |
| 36. Mario Lazcano; Community Leader and Activist | 47. Susie Del Toro – Veterans Advocate & Activist |
| 37. Captain Frank Morales, Lieutenant Cesar Garcia, Engineer Danny Castro, Lieutenant George Torres; Coachella Volunteer Firefighters | 48. Hon. Laura C. Garcia – Judge & Advocate |
| 38. Clara Herrera and Clara Nieblas, Community Advocate and Activist | 49. Araceli De La Torre – Educator & Mentor |
| 39. Rosalia Plata; Community Advocate and Activist | 50. Oralia Ortiz – Community Leader & Activist |
| 40. Baltazar Aguirre; Exceptional Citizen and Activist | 51. Ruben Gonzalez – Community Advocate & Activist |
| 41. Maria Magdalena Rodriguez; Exceptional Citizen | 52. Susie Del Toro – Veterans Advocate & Activist |
| | 53. Hon. Laura C. Garcia – Judge & Advocate |
| | 54. Araceli De La Torre – Educator & Mentor |

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Annually, during the City's Tree Lighting Ceremony the City has recognized individuals or organizations as Hometown Heroes; staff recommends selecting up to 5 honorees per year. The selected Hometown Heroes are also invited to participate in the Holiday Parade and are led by the Grand Marshal. The recommended Grand Marshal, Coach and Mentor Lee Espinoza, was selected by staff as a noteworthy community member and former Hometown Hero Recipient. The City requested community input from late September through early November using its social media platforms and received the following 2025 Hometown Heroes nominee recommendations (10 nominees):

1. Maria Del Carmen Banda
2. Marcos Caballero
3. Cecelia Paniagua
4. Linda Cantu
5. Maria Mendoza
6. Rosie Martinez
7. Nick Meza
8. Amaya Munoz
9. Gabriel D. Martin, PhD (16 nominations)
10. Aaron Gasu (5 nominations)

ALTERNATIVES: None.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENT(S): None.