



CITY OF SIGNAL STAFF

2175 Cherry Avenue • Signal
Hill, California 90755-3799

12/9/2025

AGENDA ITEM

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**FROM: CARLO TOMAINO
CITY MANAGER**

**BY: YVETTE E. AGUILAR
DEPUTY CITY MANAGER/
PARKS, RECREATION AND LIBRARY SERVICES DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF AN ANNUAL JESSIE NELSON DAY OF
REMEMBRANCE**

Summary:

Jesse Nelson served as the first mayor of Signal Hill at the time of its incorporation. Her role was historically significant not only because she helped guide the newly formed city through its earliest governance decisions, but because she did so as a female mayor at a time when women in political leadership were rare. Her tenure set an aspirational tone for the city, promoting progressive thought, civic responsibility, and an inclusive approach to community building. At the City Council meeting of September 9, 2025, City Council provided staff with direction to propose a Jessie Nelson Day of Remembrance and provide ideas for programming to recognize her accomplishments and contributions to the City.

Strategic Plan Goal(s):

Goal No. 5: High-Functioning Government: Strengthen internal communication, recruitment, retention, systems, and processes to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of City services.

Recommendation:

Provide staff with direction regarding the potential designation of April 14 as Jessie Nelson Day of Remembrance annually as desired.

Fiscal Impact:

Staff estimates that the programming schedule, as proposed, would have an annual cost of approximately \$5,000. Subject to further direction, staff would return to the City Council with a proposed budget adjustment.

Background:

At the City Council meeting of August 26, 2025, Mayor Jones received support from Council Member Woods to enable further discussion of designating a day in April as a Jessie Nelson Day of Remembrance. On September 9, 2025, staff agendaized the potential designation of an annual Jessie Nelson Day of Remembrance and City Council instructed staff to return with a recommendation for the date of designation in April, and provide programming ideas to commemorate the occasion. Council Member Woods requested staff identify a way to permanently recognize Jessie Nelson that would also be easily accessible to the public.

Analysis:

Jesse Nelson served as the first mayor of Signal Hill at the time of its incorporation. Her role was historically significant not only because she helped guide the newly formed city through its earliest governance decisions, but because she did so as a female mayor at a time when women in political leadership were rare. Her tenure set an aspirational tone for the City, promoting progressive thought, civic responsibility, and an inclusive approach to community building.

Under Nelson's leadership, the City navigated the complex transition from an unincorporated oil-producing area to an organized municipality. Her forward-thinking perspective helped establish foundational policies, community standards, and a governance style that valued transparency and collaboration. Jesse Nelson's example continues to serve as a critical point of pride for the community and is an inspiration for future generations of civic leaders.

In consideration of the City Council's desire to explore dates in April to commemorate a Jessie Nelson Day of Remembrance, staff proposes selecting the City's official date of incorporation on April 14 each year.

Further, staff has also explored additional programming opportunities to commemorate the occasion during the month of April:

- Annual Jesse Nelson Lecture Series: A lecture series featuring historians, civic scholars, women's leadership advocates, or current and former elected officials. Potential topics may include early Signal Hill history, women in government, or community leadership development.
- Historical Exhibit at the Library: A curated display featuring archival photos, newspaper articles, correspondence, and contextual information about Signal Hill's early years. Staff would also explore collaborations with partners, such as the Signal Hill Historical Society, or local historians, to curate an exhibit.
- Guided Civic History Walk: A walking tour highlighting significant sites related to early Signal Hill history and Jesse Nelson's leadership.
- Proclamation Dedication: A formal proclamation recognizing April 14 as Jesse Nelson Day of Remembrance at a City Council meeting, and invite community leaders, youth groups, and residents to participate.
- Women in Leadership Panel Discussion: Panel discussions featuring local elected officials, city leaders, and community advocates, with a focus on empowerment, civic engagement, and Nelson's legacy.

- Educational Youth Workshop: Programs for local schools or youth groups introducing students to municipal government and historical civic leaders.
- Commemorative Social Media Campaign: A storytelling series highlighting Jesse Nelson's achievements and the City's incorporation anniversary which could include historical facts, quotes, archival images, and community testimonials.
- Planting Ceremony or Plaque Dedication: Plan an organized commemorative tree planting event or locate a dedicated landscaped area in Jesse Nelson's honor at a City park or at the Civic Center, with a plaque dedication to formalize the City's commemoration.
- Film Series: Feature *Oil! On Signal Hill* documentary screening and host a Q&A with the filmmaker, local historian, or Signal Hill Historical Society members.
- Arts and Culture Programs: Host Signal Hill-themed paint & sip evening, organize a dried flower arrangement class, host a newspaper basketweaving workshop, or embroidery class with an image that commemorates Jessie Nelson's contributions.

Staff recommends the City Council provide direction to staff to designate April 14 as the Jessie Nelson Day of Remembrance annually and approve the recommended programs for implementation recognize Jesse Nelson's legacy. If directed, staff would then return to the City Council at a future meeting with a resolution to formalize the day of remembrance designation and also return with a request to approve a budget adjustment to implement the proposed programs.

Reviewed for Fiscal Impact:

Siamlu Cox
Administrative Services Officer/Finance Director