

RESOLUTION NO. 10-09  
A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A FEES AND CHARGES POLICY FOR MASON COUNTY  
PARKS AND TRAILS DEPARTMENT.

WHEREAS, Chapter 67.20.010 RCW, provides the authority for Counties to own and operate recreational facilities for public use, and to set forth the regulations, policies, and practices governing such use, and

WHEREAS, Mason County Parks and Trails Department owns and operates County Parks for the enjoyment and use of its residents and visitors, and

WHEREAS, County Parks receive increasing use each year from the public, while funding for administration, operations, and maintenance from the County Current Expense Fund has declined, and

WHEREAS, the implementation of Fees and Charges for certain park use and services can enhance declining revenues from the Current Expense Fund, and

WHEREAS, many of the Mason County Parks and Department services that previously were free in the future may require a fee to support park administration, operations, and maintenance;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Commissioners of Mason County does hereby establish a "Fees and Charges Policy" as set forth in Exhibit A, pertaining to the use of Mason County Parks and facilities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Parks and Trails Department, or such department or organization designated by the County with the responsibility for operating and maintaining park facilities at some point in the future, shall be authorized to develop and administer any processes and procedures necessary to implement the fees and charges policy, as set forth in Exhibit A or subsequently amended.

Signed this 10th day of February 2009.

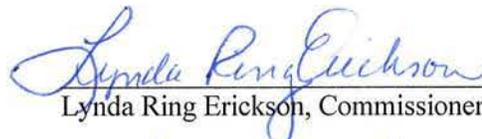
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
MASON COUNTY, WASHINGTON

ATTEST:

  
Shannon Goudy, Clerk of the Board

  
Tim Sheldon, Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

  
Lynda Ring Erickson, Commissioner

  
Monty Cobb, Chief Civil  
Deputy Prosecuting Attorney

  
Ross Gallagher, Commissioner

C: Parks and Trails Department

**Mason County  
Parks & Trails Department**

**"FEES AND CHARGES POLICY"**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Why does Mason County Parks & Trails Department need a fees and charges policy?**

The nation's park and recreation agencies have always, to a greater or lesser extent, offered diversified recreational services to its citizens, recognizing government's responsibility to provide open space, parks, trails, and leisure opportunities. But, in view of the increasingly heavy demands for new and expanded services, the rapid increase in operating costs and capital expenditures, and because of limited access to tax revenue, it has become difficult to maintain existing levels of service, much less provide new services. Consequently, park and recreation agencies must develop sound and consistent policies that will serve as a tool for evaluating services and establishing appropriate fees and charges. The imposition of fees makes possible for continued maintenance services, administrative support, recreation services and can be justified on the basis that such services would not otherwise be possible.

The reduction in the availability of tax dollars for public services, particularly at local levels of government for parks and recreation services continues to shrink. The result is local jurisdictions must either to reduce the quality and range of community services offered or to seek alternate revenue sources to finance these services, or both.

In many government organizations the primary alternate source of revenue to the property tax and sales tax is reasonably based user fees and charges that have a direct service benefit..

#### **I. STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY:**

The underlying principle of the Mason County Parks & Trails Department fiscal program must be to efficiently offer the most diversified recreational services possible, ensuring that all citizens of Mason County have equal opportunity and choice in participation. Since the demand placed upon the department to provide services is greater than the public's ability or willingness to appropriate public funds to support that demand, it has become an economic necessity to charge certain fees for these services. However, fees and charges for Mason County Parks & Trails Department services provide only one source of financing for the public agency. Fees must be thoroughly evaluated prior to inception to integrate them into the fiscal matrix supporting public parks and recreation services, a matrix which includes general fund appropriations, capital improvements funds, grants-in-aid, and special gifts and donations. The Board of County Commissioners, as the policy body of Mason County, must determine the amount of general fund support versus user fees.

The goal of this fees and charges policy analysis is to establish a written operating philosophy and a consistent policy statement that will be formally adopted by the Park & Recreation Advisory Board and the Mason County Board of County Commissioners.

A. General Philosophies

**Mason County Parks and Trails Department Mission Statement:**

**“Provide a diverse system of safe, attractive, and professionally maintained parks, trails, and recreation opportunities designed to enhance the quality of life for all who reside in and visit Mason County.”**

**IT IS THE GOAL OF MASON COUNTY TO PROVIDE  
OUR CITIZENS:**

**A Quality of Life Commitment by:**

- Providing for each individual within Mason County; recreation, parks, trails, and open spaces;
- Providing safe and clean recreation and park facilities for use by the public; and
- Providing accessibility for all and encouragement for everyone’s active participation.

**Quality Parks & Recreation Services by:**

- Providing adequately trained, qualified and certified staff for park maintenance and operations;
- Providing trained and qualified staff for office operations and administration, and
- Providing trained and qualified staff to deliver excellence in customer service.

**Opportunities for Community Involvement by:**

- Involving the public in the planning, design, operation and evaluation of park programs, activities and facilities; and
- Providing the opportunity for all residents to visit parks and trails and to utilize the facilities of the department.

**Excellence in Fiscal and Operational Services by:**

- Developing an objective cost analysis to use as a planning and operating tool to improve the management and cost recovery for department services;
- Providing County residents with fees and charges that reflect the tax support provided to the department by the County elected;
- Establishing user fees and charges that are equitable for all users;
- Establishing user fees that encourage payment by users for services provided to individuals or user groups for their specific use;
- Establishing a scholarship program to provide assistance to those who can not

- afford the fees and charges; and
- Continuing to provide fundamental basic services free of charge, except through taxes paid, to the public.

B. Specific Philosophies

**IT IS THE POLICY OF MASON COUNTY THAT:**

1. Basic Park & Recreation Services Should Be Free

Fundamental services are those that tend to preserve and promote physical and mental well being, provide patron safety, and provide park and recreation services and facilities to groups with limited ability to provide for themselves, such as the young, the older citizen, the disabled and the economically disadvantaged. Therefore, public funds should be used for acquisition of lands, improvement of existing property and facilities, management, maintenance and basic services.

**Other park and recreation services and facilities should be free unless fees are determined appropriate because of one or more of the following:**

- a. Cost per hour of the service or operating the facility. This may be so where:
  - the service uses consumable materials;
  - the service requires a facility with high capital, operating or maintenance costs;
  - the service requires special preparation or clean-up (baseball fields);
  - the service requires an extra cost above the average normal anticipated cost.
- b. A fee will expand activities for all people, at the least possible cost to the majority of citizens; therefore, charging a fee assists in providing activities of a special nature.
- c. Use of the service or facility is limited to a relatively few individuals or special interest groups of a private character; therefore, those who directly benefit to the exclusion of others should pay extra for the privileges enjoyed.
- d. Public property is used for private economic gain; therefore, the fees and charges for use of public recreation and park facilities by private and closed membership groups should be implemented.
- e. The public demands more activities and more services beyond the level of commitment from appropriated taxes dedicated to pay for them.

2. Special Considerations given:

Mason County Parks and Trails Department fees and charges policy must be flexible to allow for discounts for people who do not have the ability to pay and or organizations that agree to a formal partnership with the City.

a. Ability to Pay Criteria:

Some individuals may not be able to afford the fees and charges for facilities managed by the department. In such cases the department may provide discounted rates.

b. Special Interest/Partnership Groups:

Special consideration should not be granted to special interest groups or individuals in the form of discounted fees or charges. Exceptions may be granted to groups who are sponsored by the Department and/or the County who provide in-kind volunteer services or revenue donations with a direct benefit to the operations and maintenance of the Department. Partnership agreements may also provide opportunities for exception consideration. In all cases this must be addressed within the formal partnership agreement.

c. Proprietary or Commercial Groups:

Proprietary or commercial groups using Mason County parks or facilities for financial gain or profit should be charged an additional fee for the privilege of conducting their business on Mason County Parks & Trails Department property. Such additional fees are warranted in that the Department's fee and charges program is designed to recover costs for facilities on a non-profit basis. Therefore, the use of these facilities by for profit purposes is inconsistent with Mason County Parks & Trails Departments basic philosophy and revenue goals. Where public developed and maintained resources are used by a for-profit group to make a profit, the public should share in that profit to recover a portion of the management and development costs.

d. Non residents:

Definition: *An individual and immediate family not residing in and/or owning property/business within the boundaries of Mason County.*

Many individuals who live outside Mason County participate in and enjoy

the use of Mason County Parks & Trails Department facilities and recreation services but make no property tax contribution to help support the operation.

Therefore, it may be reasonable to incorporate into the fee-and-charges policy, non-resident fees for admission, reservations/rentals, and participation fees.

Note: any park acquired or developed with grant money from the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) can not have a higher non-resident fee charged and a low resident fee charged.

## **II. DEFINITIONS OF FEES AND CHARGES**

### **A. Basic Services**

Basic Services are the maintenance of clean, safe, attractive parks and buildings for the general public as well as services to those persons who are unable to take advantage of the regular services because of either financial restrictions or a disability.

Generally, basic services are offered to the public free. All costs for providing these basic services are paid from the appropriated budget. Unscheduled use at a park play area would be an example.

### **B. Special Services**

Special Services are those above Basic Services, for which the department normally incurs additional costs or which are provided for the benefit of a particular individual or group rather than the general public. Program administrative costs (salaries plus fringe benefits) as well as the cost of the services and supplies associated with the provision of these specialized recreation programs shall be offset by the assessment of an appropriate fee. Rental of baseball fields or picnic shelter would be an example.

## **III. TYPES OF FEES AND CHARGES**

Mason County Parks & Trails Department has identified six (6) basic fees and charges. They are:

### **A. Entrance Fee**

A fee charged for usage of a park, or developed site, usually large, open area with controlled access/egress, such as the sports complexes.

### **B. Admission Fee**

A fee charged for entry into a building or structure. Some type of program, event, demonstration, or exhibit to attract visitors is usually offered. A special event at a facility would be an example.

C. Rental or Reservation Fee

Payment for the exclusive use of a facility. The word exclusive is emphasized because the individual pays for the privilege of using the facility without interference. For example, if the Shelter at Walker Park is reserved for a family reunion, the group has exclusive use during the rental period. Equipment, such as additional picnic tables, barbecues or staff time for set-up, take down or clean-up, could also be covered by the fee.

D. User Fee

A charge to an individual or organization for use of a park or facility. The field use fees at MCRA and Sandhill Park are examples, or the fee to launch a boat at one of the County boat launches.

E. License or Permit Fee

A fee to account for the privilege to perform a particular action. The payment for a permit or license to use the parks for profit or for a commercial enterprise to operate within a park or facility.

F. Special Services Fee

A charge for receiving extraordinary services beyond customary levels or for having the use of special equipment or facilities where the benefits are specific to the individual or group which requests the service. Installation of a pitching mound is an example.

**IV. FEE ESTABLISHMENT**

In cases where fees are to be charged, the fee rate should be instituted to off set operational costs if possible and to lower the financial subsidy that is provided to the Parks and Trails Department through the budget process. For example, fees charged for baseball games should be based to the greatest degree possible on the costs to prepare a field, including labor charges and supplies. Capital cost for equipment would generally not be included in the fee calculation.

**V. COMMERCIAL USE OF FACILITIES**

Safeguards are necessary to ensure proper use of public facilities when requests are received by the Department to conduct commercial or promotional activities on park or

County property or to utilize the names of public structures or facilities in advertising a product.

A. Requisites for Approval:

- Commercial and promotional activities in parks and recreation facilities should be authorized only if they provide a positive public service and meet a legitimate public need and do not take precedence over public recreation use.
- Commercial or promotional activities on park property shall be permitted only when they are clearly not in conflict with ongoing Department sponsored programs, or if the program can be conducted without any restriction on public use for an unreasonable period of time.
- Commercial or promotional use of public facilities including use of public names of structures should not be authorized if such use constitutes an expressed or implied endorsement of commercial products, services, or activities.
- Fee's charged for commercial use of parks should be higher than fees charged to the general public for recreational use in cases where a fee is charged to the public to use parks.

B. Authorization to Approve Requests:

A request to conduct commercial or promotional activities on park areas, to post forms of advertising on park premises, or to utilize the names of structures or facilities in advertising a product should be directed to the Parks & Trails Director.

- Approval shall be granted by the Director or their designated representative for permission to post signs, banners, posters or any other forms of advertising on park facilities. All materials of this type must be consistent with the overall aesthetic appearance of the park. Advertising materials for specific activities must be taken down upon completion of the event. Such items donated for permanent use at a park facility must meet all of the aforementioned requirements for approval.
- Requests to utilize the names of public structures or facilities in advertising a product should be forwarded to the Director for approval.
- Commercial activities will be approved through a license or permit process.

C. Charges for Commercial Activities:

All costs incurred by the Department resulting from commercial use of a park or

County facility should be recoverable as a part of the special service fee.

- Groups or organizations conducting commercial activities at park facilities must pay a higher rate than the prevailing rental rates for use of the facility by the general public.
- Sponsors of profit-making, commercial activities conducted on park or County property must provide the department with evidence of comprehensive general liability insurance sufficient to protect the County against risk, with a limit of at least \$1.0 million for each occurrence, which names the County as an additional insured, or Certificates of Insurance acceptable to the Director.
- In addition to the rental fee and insurance, the sponsors of profit-making, commercial activities conducted on park or County property should pay the County a percent of the gross receipts to be established by the Park & Recreation Advisory Board. (Example: Flea Market in County parking lot.)
- Any ongoing commercial or profit making operation using County facilities will be require a special license or permit, with the duration and fee's established through the license or permit application process.
- Within thirty (30) days after a commercial or promotional activity, an itemized list of all gross income associated with such an event is to be transmitted to the Director, together with payment of the established percentage fee.

D. Charges for Charitable (non-sponsored) Activities:

- Charitable, non-profit, community-serving organizations which conduct an event on park property for the purpose of raising funds, not sponsored by the Department, must pay only the facility rental fees or the established percent of their gross receipts, whichever is greater. Organization must provide IRS status to verify standing.
- Charitable, non-profit, community-serving organizations should also provide the Department with evidence of comprehensive general liability insurance sufficient to protect the County against risk, with a limit of at least \$1.0 million for each occurrence, which names the County as an additional insured, or Certificate of Insurance acceptable to the Director.
- Fees collected by the Department from these fund-raising activities on park facilities will be deposited in the Parks and Trails Department Revenue budget.

E. Charges for Charitable (sponsored) Activities:

Charitable, non-profit, community-serving organizations which conduct an event on

park property for the purpose of raising funds for the Parks and Trails Department activities or projects, should not be required to pay facility rental fees or percentages of gross receipts, nor should they be required to carry insurance.

All revenues collected from these fund-raising activities on park facilities should be turned over to the Department, and deposited into a designated project account and credited as a gift or donation.

## **VI. CALCULATING FEES AND CHARGES**

Fee's and charges shall be established by the Board of County Commissioners. Once fees are approved, fees and charges will be adjusted annually beginning in 2011 by using the Seattle Consumer Price (CPI) Index. See exhibit A, CPI Forecast.

## **VII. USE OF PARKS AND TRAILS DEPARTMENT FEES AND CHARGES**

Parks and Trails Department fee's and charges will be used to supplement the Parks and Trails Department annual budget from the County Current Expense Fund budget. Intent of utilizing various fees and charges is to use these funds in the operations and maintenance of Parks and Trails facilities. Specifically to use fees collected in specialized operations. An example would be to use ballfield use fee's for the operation and maintenance of MCRA and Sandhill Parks.

## **VIII. EVALUATION OF POLICY AND FEES AND CHARGE SCHEDULE**

Mason County Parks & Recreation Department shall review annually the Fees and Charges Policy and the Fees and Charges Schedule and make appropriate adjustments as recommended by the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board and approved by the County Commissioners.

## **IX. AUTHORITY FOR SETTING FEES AND CHARGES**

A. The County Commissioners are responsible for setting the Fees and Charges Schedule. Mason County Parks and Trails staff and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board will provide recommendations for establishing fees and charges.

**Exhibit A**  
**CPI Forecast**

<b>Forecast of Seattle CPI-U, All items (1982-84=100)</b>				
Updated 8-22-08				
	Index:	Annual		
	<u>1982-84=100</u>	<u>growth rate</u>		
2000 (actual)	179.2	3.7%		
2001 (actual)	185.7	3.6%		
2002 (actual)	189.3	1.9%		
2003 (actual)	192.3	1.6%		
2004 (actual)	194.7	1.2%		
2005 (actual)	200.2	2.8%		
2006 (actual)	207.6	3.7%		
2007 (actual)	215.7	3.9%		
2008	224.0	3.9%		
2009	229.8	2.6%		
2010	235.4	2.4%		
2011	240.8	2.3%		
2012	246.2	2.3%		
2013	251.8	2.3%		
2014	257.4	2.2%		
2015	263.2	2.2%		
NOTE: CPI-U covers all urban consumers.				