

**DRAFT MINUTES
EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE MEETING
April 13, 2026**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

A special meeting of the Equestrian Committee of the City of Rolling Hills Estates was called to order by CHAIR SCHMITZ at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL

Committee Members Present: Brtis, Griggs, Martin, Shinn, Silvano, Schmitz

Committee Members Absent: Harik, Nielsen, Pope, Romanelli

City Staff Present: Assistant City Manager Alexa Davis
Assistant to the City Manager Jessica Slawson
Maintenance Superintendent Mike Goldsmith
Community Services Supervisor Rosa Pinuelas

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 9, 2026

MEMBER GRIGGS moved, seconded by MEMBER SILVANO to:

APPROVE THE DRAFT MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 9, 2026, EQUESTRIAN
COMMITTEE MEETING

There being no objection, CHAIR SCHMITZ so ordered.

4. AUDIENCE ITEMS WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATIONS NOT ON AGENDA

NONE.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

****ITEM 5E. TAKEN OUT OF ORDER****

E. COMMUNITY SERVICES FEE STUDY UPDATE - EQUESTRIAN SERVICES

CHAIR SCHMITZ provided an overview of the purpose of the item and explained that the discussion represents the initial step in a multi-phase process to review equestrian-related fees. She stated that no fee changes would be adopted at this meeting and that the goal was to present information and gather feedback from the public and the Committee to inform future discussions through the Parks and Activities Commission and ultimately the City Council.

Assistant City Manager (ACM) Davis and Supervisor Pinuelas provided an overview of the item (as per the agenda material).

ACM Davis stated that a comprehensive study of Community Services Department fees was conducted upon the recommendation of Staff to evaluate the full cost of providing services at City facilities. She reported that the study included equestrian-related services including arena use, stall rentals, and horse trainer permits.

ACM Davis explained that equestrian services fall into Category II programs based on the City's cost recovery policy, which are designated at partial cost recovery, not full cost recovery. She stated that the purpose of the discussion was to gather feedback regarding potential cost recovery levels that can balance affordability, access, and sustainability. ACM Davis emphasized the importance of the community's equestrian heritage and shared that the study is informational in nature and is not intended as a recommendation to implement full cost recovery.

Supervisor Pinuelas reviewed equestrian service fee categories, including horse trainer permits (Categories 1–3), city property use charges, and potential new fees for one-day trainer permits. She explained that baseline costs were calculated using factors such as staff time, maintenance, utilities, and overhead. She presented the concept of a new trainer category for those who mainly conduct business on the trails for the Committee's consideration and also presented examples of various cost recovery scenarios, including phased approaches over time, for illustrative purposes only.

CHAIR SCHMITZ provided some background regarding the existing Category 2 and 3 Horse Trainer permit and city property use fees.

COMMITTEE MEMBER GRIGGS inquired about the cost for a horse trainer business license and the use of property tax to cover the costs of services. She stated that she is not in favor of a new category for trail riding businesses.

ACM Davis stated that property tax revenue is included in the various City revenues used to cover City costs of services, in response to COMMITTEE MEMBER GRIGGS.

COMMITTEE MEMBER SILVANO expressed concern about the methodology used to calculate costs per trainer and that the proportion of arena usage attributed to trainers may not accurately reflect actual usage patterns, expressing that it appeared to be overstated.

COMMITTEE MEMBER SHINN agreed with COMMITTEE MEMBER SILVANO, stated the importance of preserving the City's equestrian character, and expressed that costs should be covered by existing property taxes.

Public comment was invited in-person and via email. Written public comment was received and provided to the Equestrian Committee from Robbie Foltz, Tiffany Chiu, Laura Wilton, Bruce and Roxanne Ellison, and Diana Torres regarding the item.

CHAIR SCHMITZ opened the floor to public comment.

Public comment was received during the meeting from Ken Anderson, Tiffany Chiu, Suzette James, Rachel Dwyer, Sharon Yarber, Sarah Gragg, Elyse Inferrera, Michelle Mathes, and Sheryl Steckel in opposition to increasing horse trainer fees.

Audience Members, including trainers, residents and non-residents, provided extensive input. Several speakers expressed concern that the study does not accurately reflect current use of the arenas by trainers. They also expressed concern that increasing fees could disproportionately impact horse trainers, potentially resulting in increased costs for students being trained, reduced availability of training services, and a decline in equestrian activity within the City. Additional comments included concerns that trainers are not the primary users of the arenas and trails, that increased fees may discourage trainers from operating within the City, and that the equestrian program provides a broader community benefit and should not be evaluated solely on a cost recovery basis. Some audience members also suggested offering tiers for Category 3 trainers based on use, exploring alternative funding strategies, such as fundraising or ways for residents to share costs, and evaluate ways to reduce costs including reduced servicing and outsourcing.

CHAIR SCHMITZ provided background regarding past fee studies and how fee studies are conducted in response to audience member Suzette James.

CHAIR SCHMITZ provided information regarding City funding sources and confirmed that fees for other City services were part of the fee study in response to audience member Sharon Yarber.

Public comment was closed and the presentation continued.

Supervisor Pinuelas presented proposed updates to arena rental fees at Ernie Howlett Equestrian Center, including a revised structure based on per-arena use and potential application fees.

COMMITTEE MEMBER SILVANO stated that the costs presented would be prohibitive to horse shows.

Discussion ensued regarding the limited number of rentals in recent years, and the expenses related to organizing horse shows.

COMMITTEE MEMBER GRIGGS stated that she didn't agree with charging a separate application fee and that the cost should be included in the rental fees.

CHAIR SCHMITZ opened the floor to public comment.

Additional public comment was received from Sheryl Steckel, Michelle Mathes, Rachel Dwyer, Suzette James, and Tiffany Chiu regarding the arena rental fees.

Audience members noted the limited number of current rentals and expressed concern that increasing fees could further reduce use of the facilities. It was suggested that lower or restructured fees may encourage greater participation and increase overall revenue by attracting more events and clinics. The importance of preserving equestrian facilities to support the equestrian use and activity in the City was also expressed.

COMMITTEE MEMBER MARTIN shared costs to maintain a private arena and noted that water is a large expense.

COMMITTEE MEMBER SILVANO expressed concern regarding the allocation for trainers, stating it would be unfair and that cost recovery would be difficult to achieve. She stated that reducing costs and services would be challenging and that the City should absorb the costs to support and preserve its City's equestrian character.

COMMITTEE MEMBER MARTIN stated that holding events is challenging and noted that it is the responsibility of show producers to figure out how to make the costs work, which is a difficult endeavor.

Discussion ensued regarding costs associated with organizing horse shows and the difficulty of assigning cost recovery levels when evaluating City programs and services.

COMMITTEE MEMBER Brtis stated that the methodology needed further examination and that she wanted more information.

COMMITTEE MEMBER GRIGGS stated that she felt it was unfair to put the cost burden on trainers, emphasized the importance of maintaining access to training services for the community, and expressed that requiring trainers to pay a business license tax, a permit fee and a property use charge places a significant burden on the trainers.

There was a consensus among the COMMITTEE that additional information would be needed prior to making a recommendation regarding equestrian services and that the item should be continued to the next meeting. Staff was directed to bring the item back with additional information regarding the methodology used to calculate cost allocations and the assumptions related to facility usage, including the allocations between trainer use versus recreational use of the arenas.

CHAIR SCHMITZ stated that the item would be continued to a future meeting to allow staff to provide the requested information and to allow for further discussion.

A. E-BIKE REGULATIONS UPDATE (VERBAL REPORT)

CHAIR SCHMITZ provided an overview of the item which was expanded upon by Assistant to the City Manager Slawson who reported on recent City Council discussion direction to develop an update to the Municipal Code related to e-bikes and enforcement efforts related to e-bike activity on the City's trails. Assistant to the City Manager Slawson reported that a recent enforcement operation was conducted in coordination with the Sheriff's Department at major trail heads and that additional operations were being explored.

Audience members Sheryl Steckle and Michelle Mathes provided public comment and expressed concern regarding e-bike use on the trails.

Audience member Sheryl Steckle expressed that additional preventative measures were needed.

B. UPDATED EQUINE HORSE CENSUS

Assistant to the City Manager Slawson provided an overview of the item (as per the agenda material).

Assistant to the City Manager Slawson shared that the purpose is to improve emergency preparedness and resource allocation in the event of an emergency.

Discussion ensued regarding the importance of community participation.

Assistant to the City Manager Slawson stated that the Census would be available for the community electronically and in hard copy form by request in response to COMMITTEE MEMBER GRIGGS.

C. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS LIST

Supervisor Pinuelas provided an overview of the item (as per the agenda material).

CHAIR SCHMITZ commented on completed projects which included the Dapplegray round pen renovation, tree maintenance around the Tennis Club's back courts, and the employee recognition project for David Wahba.

Supervisor Pinuelas noted that current projects in progress included fence replacements at Ernie Howlett Park and replacement of maintenance equipment needed for arena maintenance.

D. 2026 HORSE TRAINER LIST AND PERMIT UPDATE (VERBAL REPORT)

Supervisor Pinuelas provided an update on the current list of licensed trainers.

6. STAFF ITEMS

A. PETER WEBER EQUESTRIAN CENTER RESTROOM PROJECT UPDATE (VERBAL REPORT)

Supervisor Pinuelas reported that the project remains under review by Los Angeles County and is pending approval. She stated that the City is in the process of addressing the County's requested revisions and that Staff will continue to provide updates to the Committee.

Supervisor Pinuelas stated that Supervisor Hahn's office continues to provide support in response to COMMITTEE MEMBER SHINN.

B. MAYOR'S RIDE UPDATE (VERBAL REPORT)

Supervisor Pinuelas reported that the Mayor's Ride is set for May 9, 2026, shared the schedule and noted that the pancake breakfast would be again hosted by the Scouts.

C. LANDFILL LOOP TRAIL REGULATIONS (VERBAL REPORT)

Supervisor Pinuelas provided a review of regulations on the Landfill Loop trail, noting that the trail is under Los Angeles County jurisdiction and not governed by City regulations. She explained that, unlike City-owned trails where certain uses such as strollers are prohibited, the County allows strollers and wheelchairs on the Landfill Loop.

Staff further clarified that bicycles are not permitted on the Landfill Loop and noted that while the City maintains and enforces its own municipal code for City trails, it does not have authority to regulate or enforce rules on County-owned property.

Discussion ensued regarding trail use and enforcement challenges.

D. EQUESTRIAN ISSUES LOG

There were no comments regarding the Equestrian Issues Log.

E. MATTERS OF INTEREST (VERBAL REPORT)

ACM Davis shared that the Peter Weber Equestrian Center contracted operators expressed interest in extending their contract to continue their operation of the Center.

Supervisor Pinuelas stated that the next Equestrian Committee meeting was scheduled for Monday, May 18, 2026.

7. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

A. ADOPT-A-TRAIL (VERBAL REPORT)

NONE.

B. MATTERS OF INTEREST (VERBAL REPORT)

NONE.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

CHAIR SCHMITZ ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 8:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved,

Rosa Pinuelas
Community Services Supervisor

Velveth Schmitz
Chair