

**DRAFT MINUTES  
EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE MEETING  
MAY 11, 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 6:05 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

**2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

COMMITTEE MEMBER ROMANELLI led the Salute to the Flag.

**3. ROLL CALL**

Committee Members Present: Brtis, Harik, Martin, Pope, Romanelli, Shinn, Silvano, Schmitz

Committee Members Absent: Griggs, Nielsen

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

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 13, 2026**

MEMBER SILVANO moved, seconded by MEMBER SHINN to:

APPROVE THE DRAFT MINUTES OF APRIL 13, 2026, EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE MEETING.

There being no objection, CHAIR SCHMITZ so ordered.

**5. AUDIENCE ITEMS WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATIONS NOT ON AGENDA**

NONE.

**6. BUSINESS ITEMS**

**A. COMMUNITY SERVICES FEE STUDY UPDATE - EQUESTRIAN SERVICES**

CHAIR SCHMITZ introduced the item and explained the review process, noting that any recommendation from the Committee would be forwarded to the Park and Activities Commission for consideration before being presented to the City Council.

Assistant City Manager (ACM) Davis explained that the purpose of the meeting was to continue the discussion initiated at the Committee's April 13, 2026 meeting regarding the Community Services Fee Study as it relates to equestrian services and use of the Ernie Howlett Park Equestrian Center. She explained that the fee study is a detailed cost-of-service analysis prepared by Matrix Consulting Group that involves operational and financial data that includes staff time allocations, maintenance and facility operating costs, indirect overhead allocations, usage assumptions, and cost distribution methodologies across all Community Services programs. ACM Davis noted that equestrian services represent one component of the study and that all Community Services programs were evaluated in the fee study. She further explained that, in response to questions raised by the Committee at its previous meeting regarding the study's methodology and calculations, staff requested that Khushboo Ingle and Madison Dixon, representatives of Matrix Consulting Group attend the meeting (joined virtually) to provide a presentation of the study and answer questions related to the study and the methodology. ACM Davis noted that the fee study provides baseline cost information intended to assist with future policy discussions and does not constitute a recommendation to implement full cost recovery.

Khushboo Ingle, provided a presentation regarding the fee study and its methodology. She explained that the study establishes costs associated with providing services and is intended to serve as a policy tool for fiscal sustainability and inform policy decisions. The presentation included discussion regarding staff costs, maintenance and operational costs, facility use assumptions, and public versus private benefit considerations.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ROMANELLI stated that historical benchmarks and comparisons would be helpful when evaluating potential fee changes and expressed interest in understanding how current costs, fees, and trends compare to previous years.

COMMITTEE MEMBER SILVANO questioned the methodology used to calculate trainer-related costs and expressed concern regarding the assumption that trainers account for 25 percent of arena usage. She stated that the assumption did not reflect actual trainer use of the facilities and believed it overstated trainer utilization. She further noted that arena and trail use by recreational riders and other members of the public should be considered when evaluating cost allocations.

CHAIR SCHMITZ clarified that the consultant's analysis was based on potential usage under the current permit structure rather than actual use occurring at the facilities. She emphasized that the fee study evaluated costs based on allowable use under existing policies and was not intended to serve as a study of actual facility utilization.

COMMITTEE MEMBER HARIK expressed that the study assumptions should not be presented without context and that the Committee's concerns regarding the methodology and usage assumptions be conveyed as the item proceeds through the review process.

Discussion ensued regarding the methodology used to establish trainer usage allocations in the fee study, including shared concern related to the assumptions used to calculate trainer arena usage, as it may not accurately reflect current trainer activity.

COMMITTEE MEMBER SHINN requested clarification regarding administrative costs and expressed opposition to the 25 percent trainer allocation assumption.

COMMITTEE MEMBER BRTIS expressed concern regarding the 25 percent trainer allocation assumption and supported further review of the methodology.

In response to COMMITTEE MEMBER SHINN, Ms. Ingle explained that the market rate analysis was based on a review of comparable facilities and land uses in the region. She noted that the analysis was intended to identify market benchmarks for similar recreational services and determine what the market may bear, rather than to compare fees charged by individual equestrian facilities.

COMMITTEE MEMBER POPE requested additional information regarding historical fee levels, usage trends, and operational costs to better understand how fees have evolved over time and how current costs compare with prior years.

In response to COMMITTEE MEMBER POPE, Ms. Ingle clarified that the 25 percent allocation was intended to represent a trainer's potential share of arena utilization under the current permit structure and was not intended to reflect exclusive use by individual trainers. She further explained that market rate comparisons were intended to serve as a reference point for policy discussions and were not recommendations for future fees.

Discussion ensued regarding the current trainer categories, the development of the permit categories, the purpose of the fee study and the distinction between public and private use of City facilities. Committee Members discussed the trainer permit categories, noting that they were created to account for varying levels of trainer activity and facility use.

CHAIR SCHMITZ stated that the purpose of the fee study is to establish a baseline understanding of current costs, usage, and fee structures to inform future policy recommendations. She noted that the City does not have comprehensive historical data because this level of analysis had not previously been conducted, but that the study provides a foundation for future comparisons. CHAIR SCHMITZ further emphasized that the study is intended to evaluate the costs associated with maintaining City facilities and provide a framework for assessing how public

resources are utilized by both the community and private businesses. She also noted the importance of balancing the costs associated with maintaining the City's equestrian facilities with the needs of the community as a whole.

Discussion ensued regarding potential modifications to the current trainer permit categories and fee structures. Staff clarified that the fee study provides baseline cost information that can be used to inform future policy recommendations and that the Committee may recommend maintaining the current structure, modifying existing categories and fees, or developing a new fee structure for consideration by the Parks and Activities Commission and City Council. Committee Members also discussed the possibility of creating alternative fee categories and evaluating additional fee structures based on facility usage.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ROMANELLI suggested the formation of a subcommittee to review the fee study assumptions, including the 25 percent trainer allocation and the Category 3 permit category, to determine whether the current methodology appropriately reflects trainer utilization.

Discussion ensued regarding the assumptions used to allocate trainer facility costs and the distinction between the fee study and an analysis of actual facility usage.

Public comment was opened regarding the consultant's presentation and the fee study methodology.

Audience members Angela Hronco, Ashley Copp, and Amy Iden provided comments regarding the methodology used in the fee study and the assumptions related to trainer utilization of the City's equestrian facilities expressing concern that the study may not accurately reflect actual arena usage patterns and noted that trainers, residents, recreational riders, and boarders often share use of the facilities. Comments also addressed the role trainers play in supporting rider safety and equestrian participation, the distinction between resident and non-resident users, and concerns that increased trainer fees could ultimately result in higher costs for riders.

Following public comment, staff presented an overview of the current fee structure and policy considerations related to equestrian services.

Discussion ensued regarding the formation of a subcommittee, cost recovery objectives, and opportunities to re-evaluate the use of the Ernie Howlett Park stalls.

COMMITTEE MEMBER SILVANO expressed support for establishing a subcommittee to conduct a more detailed review of the fee study and related policy considerations. She also suggested exploring alternative stall rental options.

COMMITTEE MEMBER SHINN agreed that additional review was warranted and emphasized the importance of ensuring that any future recommendations remain equitable.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ROMANELLI suggested that the Committee first establish a target cost recovery goal before evaluating specific fee structures and permit categories. He also questioned whether the stall rental program at Ernie Howlett Park continues to serve its intended purpose and suggested that opportunities may exist to reduce administrative costs and improve operational efficiency.

Public comment was invited in-person, via e-comment, and via email. Written public comment regarding the item was received and provided to the Equestrian Committee from the Alonso Family, Connor Lynch, and Tiffany Chiu. CHAIR SCHMITZ read written comments received from those not in attendance including a written comment Sienna Tucker and invited Tiffany Chiu to read her written public comment.

Public comment was received at this point of the meeting from Suzette James, Nancy Wildman, Sarah Gragg, Tiffany Chiu, Ashley Copp, and Ruth Sobek. Audience Members provided extensive input regarding the fee study methodology and potential implications of increased fees. Several speakers expressed concern that the assumptions used in the study, particularly the 25 percent trainer allocation, do not accurately reflect actual facility usage and could disproportionately shift costs to a small number of trainers. Speakers emphasized the importance of preserving the City's equestrian character and noted that equestrian facilities provide a broader community benefit that extends beyond individual users. Additional comments included concerns that increased trainer fees could result in higher costs for riders, suggestions to explore alternative funding and cost allocation approaches, questions regarding resident and non-resident use of equestrian facilities, and concerns regarding the current treatment of one-day trainer permits. Several speakers also noted the important role trainers play in supporting rider safety, education, and participation within the equestrian community.

COMMITTEE MEMBER GRIGGS submitted written comments as she was unable to attend the meeting. Her written comments were read into the record, expressing opposition to increases in trainer fees and equestrian facility rental fees and concern that increased fees could reduce trainer participation and facility usage.

As there was a consensus among the COMMITTEE that a subcommittee should be established to provide further review of equestrian service fees, CHAIR SCHMITZ asked for volunteers. A subcommittee consisting of COMMITTEE MEMBERS SILVANO, SHINN, BRTIS, and MARTIN was established to review the fee study and provide recommendations to the full Committee at a future meeting.

Staff continued the presentation reviewing the current fee structures, baseline costs, and cost recovery information associated with each category and identifying several policy considerations. Discussion ensued regarding trainer permit fees, property use charges, arena rental fees, and stall rental fees.

COMMITTEE MEMBER HARIK expressed support for evaluating arena rental fees based on the characteristics and maintenance requirements of individual arenas.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ROMANELLI requested that the subcommittee have more information regarding baseline cost calculations to assist in its review.

COMMITTEE MEMBER SILVANO reiterated concerns regarding the trainer utilization assumptions used in the fee study and expressed interest in exploring alternative fee structures, and opportunities to increase utilization of equestrian facilities.

Committee Members discussed the importance of evaluating alternative revenue sources, programming opportunities, and policy options in addition to fee increases. There was consensus that further review was needed before making recommendations and that these issues should be evaluated by the proposed subcommittee.

CHAIR SCHMITZ emphasized the importance of a thoughtful, data-driven review process and noted that the purpose of the discussion was to develop informed recommendations for future consideration.

Staff was directed to coordinate the Subcommittee's review of the item and return Subcommittee recommendations to the Committee at a future meeting.

**7. STAFF ITEMS**

**A. MATTERS OF INTEREST (VERBAL REPORT)**

NONE.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

CHAIR SCHMITZ ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved,

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Rosa Pinuelas  
Community Services Supervisor

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Velveth Schmitz  
Chair