



General Services Agency

COUNTY OF TULARE AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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AGENDA DATE: April 1, 2025 - **REVISED**

Public Hearing Required	Yes
Scheduled Public Hearing w/Clerk	Yes
Published Notice Required	Yes
Advertised Published Notice	Yes
Meet & Confer Required	N/A
Budget Transfer (Aud 308) attached	N/A
Personnel Resolution attached	N/A
Agreement(s) attached	N/A

CONTACT PERSON: Maria Benavides-Lopez PHONE: 559-205-1124

SUBJECT: Parks Fees 2025/26

REQUEST(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Conduct a public hearing considering the proposed fee adjustments as listed in Attachment A – FY 2025/26 Summary of Proposed Fees.
2. Find that the creation of the Single-Day Vendor and Year-Round Vendor permits for the County Parks are necessary to ensure the public's use and enjoyment of natural resources and recreational opportunities within the County Parks.
3. Authorize the General Services Agency Director, or designee, to issue the Single-Day Vendor and Year-Round Vendor permits, including setting reasonable restrictions on the number of vendors or location at which stationary vendors may vend to prevent an undue concentration of commercial activity that unreasonably interferes with the scenic and natural character of the Parks.
4. Approve the FY 2025/26 Summary of Proposed Fees, to be effective July 1, 2025.

SUMMARY:

The General Services Agency (GSA) Parks Division (Parks) charges fees for Parks entrance, arbor rentals, special events, and camping in County Parks. Parks fees have remained unchanged since July 1, 2019. At that time, GSA intended to update the fees every two years to ensure gradual growth that would align Parks fees more consistently with other local entities. Following the COVID-19 Pandemic, the County allocated a significant amount of Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and County funds to make essential improvements to the Parks amenities. Therefore, GSA decided to pause fee adjustments until the improvements were completed.

With projects now complete, these enhancements have strengthened Parks infrastructure and created a more enjoyable experience for the community. This included replacing or repairing arbors, benches, and grills, upgrading irrigation systems, pond and

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bridge upgrades, playground improvements, pier reconstruction, and paving.

To align fees with these improvements while ensuring accessibility, staff recommend eliminating Parks entrance fees, standardizing existing fees across all Parks, and introducing new fees for recently developed amenities. These proposed changes will support sustainable operations, and promote fairness and transparency, while benefiting County residents and visitors alike.

Staff conducted a comparative analysis of neighboring communities' fee structures, and it was revealed that higher fees are typically assessed for arbor rentals and event reservations. With the recent upgrades to Parks infrastructure, County amenity offerings are now comparable to amenities found in surrounding jurisdictions. As such, the proposed fee increases are reasonable and consistent with established practices in neighboring communities. Furthermore, while certain proposed fee adjustments in Tulare County represent increases, they remain below the actual cost of service delivery.

The following outlines the proposed adjustments to Parks fees for the 2025/26 fiscal year, organized by category, and further detailed in Attachment A – FY 2025/26 Summary of Proposed Fees (Attachment A) of this Agenda Item.

FEES IMPACTING ALL PARKS

Entrance Fees

Currently, entrance fees are charged at Bartlett, Cutler, Kings River, and Mooney Grove Parks on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from March through October. Fees are as follows:

- Bartlett and Cutler Parks: \$5 per vehicle; \$3 per vehicle for seniors (62+) and persons with disabilities.
- Kings River Park: \$5 per person.
- Mooney Grove Park: \$6 per vehicle; \$3 per vehicle for seniors (62+) and persons with disabilities. \$1 from each Mooney Grove Park entrance fee supports the Tulare County Museum.

The collection of entrance fees presents operational challenges, including logistical difficulties, traffic delays, cash handling, and inconsistent staffing coverage. While eliminating entrance fees would improve operational efficiency, it would also increase community accessibility by easing financial burdens on the public. This would encourage greater Parks usage, thereby enhancing public health and well-being.

The elimination of entrance fees would also include bus entrance fees, annual Park passes, and the Balch Park Day Use Fee.

Historical revenue from the past decade indicates that the peak annual collection of Parks entrance fees was \$143,000, with \$13,000 designated for the Tulare County Museum. Conversely, expenditures of staffing gate booths totaled \$38,000 annually. As such, the net revenue impact of eliminating entrance fees would be \$92,000 to the Parks budget and \$13,000 to the Museum budget.

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Arbor Fees

Within the County's Parks system, the cost to rent arbors varies from park to park. For example, the cost to rent a small arbor at Alpaugh Park differs from the cost to rent the same size arbor at Mooney Grove Park. To ensure consistency, it is recommended arbor rental fees across all County Parks be adjusted based on size and capacity as follows:

Arbor Size	Current Fee	Proposed Fee	Capacity
S	\$40 - \$50	\$50	10-30
M	\$55	\$70	40-75
L	\$75 - \$125	\$100	144
XL	\$150	\$135	250-450

A survey of arbor rental fees in surrounding counties and cities revealed a rental cost ranging from \$40 to \$200. The proposed arbor rental fees, as detailed in the table above, represent an incremental increase ensuring continued affordability for Parks patrons. The complete replacement of all tables and grills further substantiates the proposed fee structure.

Sports Fields & Courts

To clarify this amenity fee, it is recommended that *Sports Fields & Courts* have a distinct reservation fee. The County offers diverse field and court types, including soccer, baseball, and softball fields, and basketball courts. It is proposed the fee of \$25 be adjusted to \$50 to help recover a portion of the cost for reservation oversight and Parks amenity upkeep. The proposed amount will remain significantly lower than comparable fees in surrounding jurisdictions.

Horseshoe Pits

Horseshoe Pits were previously included under the *All Sports fields/Courts/Pits* fee. Because this amenity requires less upkeep, it is recommended a new fee be designated to *Horseshoe Pits*. The new proposed fee of \$10 for horseshoe reservations will help recover a portion of the cost of administering reservations and maintaining Parks amenities.

Picnic Tables & Grills – No Arbor

All County Parks have recently received new and replaced standalone tables, benches, and grills. It is proposed a fee of \$25 be imposed to reserve a picnic table area. This new fee will help recover a portion of the cost of processing reservations and maintaining these new amenities.

Running Events

A new \$200 base fee is proposed for all organized running events utilizing Parks spaces. These events may be subject to additional fees depending on impacted amenities. This fee will address the growing number of events, promote equitable access for all Parks users, and recover a portion of the administrative costs associated with event processing, permitting, and oversight. Staff engaged with the local running community regarding the proposed fee structure to ensure support of the fee as reasonable.

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Disc Golf Course

There are currently seven Disc Golf courses spanning six County parks: Bartlett, Cutler, Kings River, Mooney Grove, Pixley, and Woodville. These courses require substantial use of space within a park and limit access to amenities located in close proximity to the courses while in use. Therefore, all *Disc Golf Course* reservations will require an assessment of existing Parks reservations prior to approval. It is recommended the *Disc Golf Tournament Reservation Fee* of \$100 be changed to a *Disc Golf Course* base fee of \$100 per day, per course. These events may be subject to additional fees depending on impacted amenities.

Refundable Deposits

A 50% refundable deposit for all amenity rentals is recommended to ensure cleanliness and help prevent damage to Parks amenities.

Fee Eliminations

To streamline the reservation process and provide clarity regarding amenity availability, the following fee eliminations are recommended: *Reserve a Portion of Park*, *Reserve the Entire Park—not Mooney Grove or Balch Park*, and *Reserve the Entire Park—Mooney Grove or Balch Park*. While staff proposes the elimination of these fees they are being replaced with a more specific and consistent fee structure.

Permits

It is recommended that various Parks permits be adjusted and new permits be introduced to provide uniformity across all Parks.

- It is recommended the *Commercial Vendor* permit fee of \$30 be adjusted to a *Single-Day Vendor* fee of \$50. This applies to all businesses providing daily services or sales within the Parks. To streamline permits, the *Single-Day Vendor* fee will also replace the following fees: *DJ/Band (combo of sound and commercial permits)*, *Special Event Vendor permit*, and *Non-Special Event Vendor Permit*.
- The introduction of a new permit is recommended for *Year-Round Vendors*. For an annual fee of \$325, vendors will have unlimited year-round access to sell or provide services in all Parks. This will simplify the process by removing the need for frequent documentation and streamlining the vetting of environmental health permits and general/auto liability insurance.
- The proposed *Single-Day Vendor* and *Year-Round Vendor* fees comply with state law regarding the regulation of sidewalk vendors by local agencies in Section 51036 et seq. in the Government Code. This permitting program, including the fees, are necessary to ensure the public's continued enjoyment of the natural resources and recreational opportunities within the County Parks. Furthermore, staff recommends that the Board delegate to the GSA Director, or designee, the ability to determine how many stationary vendors may vend at any time within the various Parks and wherein the Park they may vend. This proposed delegation will help the GSA Director to ensure that commercial activity within the Parks does not unreasonably interfere with the scenic or natural character of each Park.

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- A new permit for *Before/After Hours Event Staffing* is recommended when events necessitate Parks to remain open beyond normal Parks business hours. The proposed fee is \$50 per hour, with a two-employee and two-hour minimum requirement. This will ensure adequate staffing, thorough cleanup, and maintenance of the venue.
- A new permit for *Event Overnight Stay* is recommended and will only be available in conjunction with events hosted within the Parks. The fee of \$150 per vehicle, per event, includes a \$30 refundable *Gate Lock Deposit* fee and will allow the host to stay in the Parks overnight using a self-contained camper unit. This fee is intended to guarantee sufficient staffing resources, comprehensive post-event cleanup, and regular venue upkeep.

These fee adjustments will help recover a portion of the costs dedicated to processing reservations, maintaining these new services, and ensuring consistency across all Parks.

FEES IMPACTING SPECIFIC PARKS

Balch Park

To simplify camping fees at Balch Park, a uniform rate of \$25 for all tent and RV camping patrons is recommended. This will replace the specific fees of *Tent Camping – Per Campsite for Senior/Disabled Persons* for \$10, *RV Camping – Per Campsite* for \$25, and *RV Camping – Per Campsite for Senior/Disabled Persons* for \$15. This fee adjustment will allow Balch Park's camping fees to continue to be affordable for all Parks patrons.

Bartlett Park

The newly restored Pier at Bartlett Park, a premier venue for gatherings and events, is recommended to be available for reservations. A \$200 rental fee is proposed for patrons wishing to reserve the amenity for such gatherings. This rate will help recover a portion of the administrative and maintenance costs to ensure the pier's continued upkeep.

Kings River Park

A \$5 *Dove Hunting* fee is recommended. To ensure hunter safety during dove hunting season at Kings River Park, the number of hunters will be limited to 20 per day. This seasonal fee replaces the general *Entrance Fee* and helps recover a portion of the administrative costs associated with event processing and oversight.

Mooney Grove Park

A proposed fee adjustment of \$100 to \$200 is recommended for renting the *Boy Scout Cabin Area* or *Pillar Square*. The County Parks offer unique and ideal spaces for large-scale events, an advantage not shared by local surrounding jurisdictions. To maximize public benefit and accessibility, this fee will be set at a comparatively low rate. This fee will help recover a portion of the cost of reservation oversight and Parks amenity upkeep.

PUBLIC INPUT

As part of the ongoing efforts to keep the public informed, notices of this hearing regarding the fees were published in the Visalia Times-Delta on March 18, 2025, and

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March 25, 2025.

To ensure the proposed fee adjustments remain accessible and equitable, staff met with various stakeholders within the community. These meetings were crucial in gathering diverse perspectives and assessing the potential impact of any changes. Feedback was analyzed to guarantee that no proposed fee would become cost-prohibitive. Ultimately, the objective was to strike a balance, implementing and adjusting fees that would support Parks maintenance and operations while remaining sufficiently low to encourage public events and activities within Parks spaces.

Additionally, the quarterly Parks Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings invite the public to participate and offer input on various Parks-related topics. On March 20, 2025, the proposed fee changes were reviewed at the PAC meeting, and there were no objections or recommended adjustments to the proposed fees.

The Auditor's Office approved the cost recovery methodology used to establish the proposed fees. While the proposed fee increases recover a greater percentage of costs, they do not exceed the reasonable cost of providing the service.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING:

Revenue from Parks Fees is utilized for repairs, maintenance, and operational costs in Parks budget 001-087-1140. It is requested to increase the Net County Cost by \$105,000 (\$92,000 for Parks and \$13,000 for the Museum) to compensate for the revenue loss caused by eliminating entrance fees. This will ensure adequate funding to maintain operations without relying on fee-generated income.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF TULARE STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN:

Tulare County's Strategic Plan includes the Quality of Life initiative. Adjusting Parks Fees will enable the County to continue to maintain County Parks, which provide essential quality-of-life recreational opportunities for residents while also ensuring accessibility to the public.

ADMINISTRATIVE SIGN-OFF:

/s/BrookeSisk

Brooke Sisk
General Services Agency Director

Cc: County Administrative Office

Attachments:

Attachment A – FY 2025/26 Summary of Proposed Fees

Auditor Approval Letter

PowerPoint Presentation