



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

PRC 26-09
March 26, 2026
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	Athletic Facilities Allocation and Use Policy Update	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Endorse the revised Athletic Facilities Allocation and Use Policy in substantial form.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation

STAFF:	Jeremy Jasman, Recreation Coordinator
EXHIBITS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revised Athletic Facilities Allocation and Use Policy 2. 2022 Athletic Facilities Allocation and Use Policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to seek endorsement from the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) on a revised Athletic Facilities Allocation and Use Policy (Exhibit 1).

- The current Athletic Facilities Allocation and Use Policy (Exhibit 2) was adopted in 2022 and replaced previous policy versions.
- The current policy provides a structured framework, makes steps toward addressing consistency, and clarifies access through a multi-tiered prioritization system.
- In 2024, staff began implementing procedural changes and utilizing online and web-based processes, which led to discussion with user groups on ways to enhance access to athletic fields.
- Staff collaborated with user groups and identified areas of the policy which could be strengthened to enhance resident access, maximize field capacity, and provide better clarity to allocation decisions.
- The revised policy draft:
 - Establishes a consistent and structured framework for athletic facility allocation and decision-making.
 - Maximizes community access to limited athletic facility space.
 - Prioritizes resident organizations while maintaining access for all users.
 - Supports diverse and inclusive use by incorporating criteria such as historical use, program type, age group, compatibility, and community benefit.
 - Promotes responsible stewardship of facilities, including sustainability, safety, and cost recovery.

BACKGROUND

The City of Mercer Island provides public access to athletic fields located throughout multiple parks, serving a diverse and growing user base. These facilities are maintained, scheduled and operated by Parks and Recreation staff to support recreational uses.

Currently, the City manages athletic facility access with the Athletic Facilities Allocation and Use Policy, which was endorsed by the Parks and Recreation Commission and adopted by staff in [May 2022](#). Leading up to the current version, numerous revisions have been completed over the years, adapting each time with changing user needs.

Staff and field users maintain regular communication regarding requests, facility enhancements, ways to enhance the user experience, better meet access needs, and maximize field capacity in support of revenue and cost recovery goals. Since 2022, staff have hosted annual facility user meetings, providing opportunities for input toward future procedural and policy enhancements while also educating users on current processes.

In the fall of 2024, staff piloted an online booking system that provided user groups with real-time access to facility availability and the ability to reserve time directly. The rollout was highly successful, improving accessibility for both residents and regional organizations, reducing administrative workload, and enhancing overall customer service and efficiency in the facility management process. Access to the online platform is available seasonally following a manual staff-review process of requests which prioritizes resident access. Mercer Island athletic facilities have seen a significant increase in usage as an outcome of staff efforts to more efficiently schedule bookings and using online tools. This information was provided in detail at the [October 20, 2025](#) Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting.

Most recently, staff hosted the annual field user group meeting in [December 2025](#), where they shared the goal of revising the current policy to a version which would provide clarity and better alignment with current booking practices and user needs. Staff sought user feedback in January 2026, which reflected; a desire to clarify Tier 1 definitions, better differentiate between in-season and out-of-season field use by youth organizations, and expand access for local businesses that directly serve the Mercer Island community.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

The revised draft of the Athletic Facilities Allocation and Use Policy (Exhibit 1) is intended to balance competing demands for limited public resources while preserving staff flexibility to manage facilities responsibly and equitably.

The policy refines guiding principles and establishes clearer standards for allocating access to City-managed athletic facilities. It emphasizes resident access and aims to improve transparency and predictability by introducing criteria to guide decision-making.

Key policy revisions include:

- **Simplified tier structure** – increases Mercer Island resident access while reducing administrative complexity for both applicants and staff.
- **Revised “Resident Organization” definition** – expands opportunities for residents across a broader range of organization types.
- **Emphasis on guiding principles in decision-making** – prioritizes community access, inclusive and diverse use, maximization of field capacity and cost recovery, and responsible stewardship.
- **Additional review criteria** – incorporates factors such as historic use, safety, age-appropriate assignments, and user compliance into the allocation process.
- **Exemption for City and Mercer Island School District activities** – allows these uses to be reviewed and managed in a manner more aligned with that partnership and other agreements.

Tonight, staff are seeking the PRC’s endorsement of the revised draft of the Athletic Facilities Allocation and Use Policy in substantial form.

NEXT STEPS

Following the PRC's endorsement of the policy, staff will:

- Conduct a final legal review and the Director will sign and formally adopt the policy.
 - Update any procedural changes for permitting reservations.
 - Coordinate messaging and promotion of the policy to inform user groups.
 - Implement the new policy beginning with the 2026 fall/winter season.
-

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Move to endorse the revised Athletic Facilities Allocation and Use Policy in substantial form.