



Sport Court Use and Allocation Policy

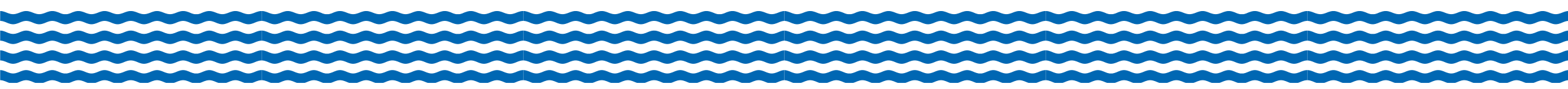
PRC 25-13

Parks and Recreation
Commission -October 20, 2025



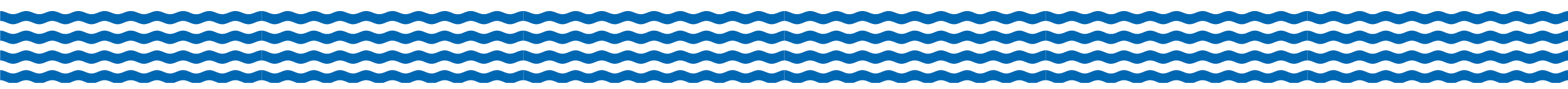
Agenda

- What is a Sport Court Use and Allocation Policy
- Background
- Current Practice
- Who's using the court facilities
- What are we hearing/experiencing
- Discussion Questions
- Next Steps



What is a *Sport Court Use and Allocation Policy*?

- Establishes fair, consistent, and transparent guidelines for how sport courts are scheduled and used.
- Defines priorities of use, criteria, and restrictions on reservations or permits.
- Provides clear framework for staff decision making and community understanding.
- Reduces user conflict, over crowding, and adverse impacts to other amenities/facilities.

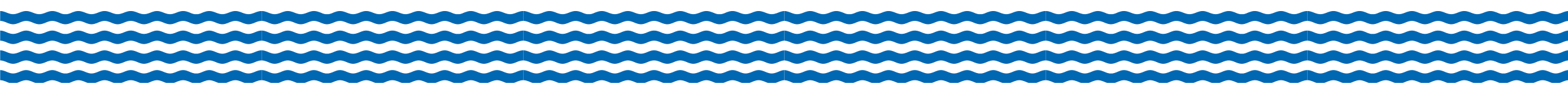


Background

- **The City's existing Sport Court facilities include:**

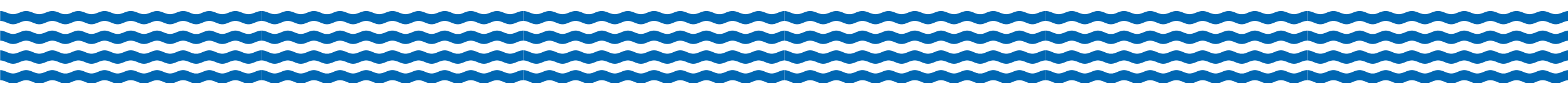
- Luther Burbank Park – 8 Pickleball Courts
 - *Jake Jacobson Pickleball Courts*
- Aubrey Davis Park – 4 Tennis Courts
- **Homestead Park – 4 Tennis Courts***
- **Island Crest Park – 2 Tennis Courts***
- Roanoke Park – 1 Tennis Court

*Currently- Homestead and Island Crest Park are the only locations we currently permit hourly reservations.



Current Practice

- The City does not currently have a policy in place to guide the allocation and use of Sport Courts.
- Sport Courts are primarily available for drop-in play during stated park hours.
- General Rules are posted at the facilities- but do not provide criteria or guidelines for reservations.
- Staff do manage limited reservations on tennis courts.
- Staff permitted a single Pickleball Tournament in August, but have otherwise declined all reservation requests for pickleball until a policy can be developed.



Who's using the Courts Currently

Tennis:

- Staff estimate 60-70% of users are Mercer Island residents
- Less engaged user group
- Demographics tend to skew to a younger age population.
- Unauthorized instructors
- Limited rentals have included:
 - Mercer Island High School Tennis Team
 - City-coordinated summer camps
 - Third-Party Instructors (private lessons)
 - Individual patrons (very rare)



Who's using the Courts Currently

Pickleball:

- Staff estimate 40-50% of users are Mercer Island residents
- Diverse demographics of users
- Engaged and vocal user group
- Unauthorized instructors
- Only one reservation has been permitted
 - Rotary Club held a 3-day tournament-fundraiser



What are we hearing



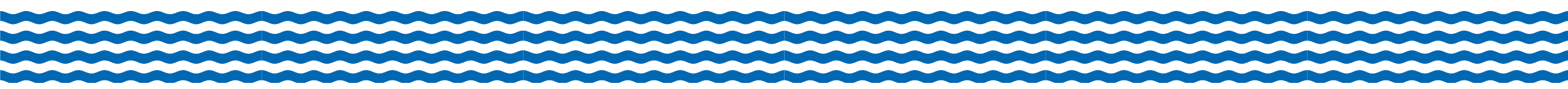
Pickleball:

Survey Respondents (Administered by Dink on Mercer Island):

- 26% supported allowing paid coaches to reserve courts for lessons
- 50% supported allowing sponsored tournaments; 35% were uncertain; 15% opposed
 - 55% favored hosting two tournaments per spring/summer season
 - 30% preferred one tournament per season
 - 15% opposed tournaments entirely

Additional input received by staff in the field emphasized:

- Courts are extremely busy during weekends and summer evenings
- Support exploring revenue opportunities through private events or permitted use
- Providing timeslots/opportunities for differing skill levels
- Creating predictable play windows to reduce overcrowding
- Offering structured programming for beginners (clinics, camps, and lessons)



What are we hearing

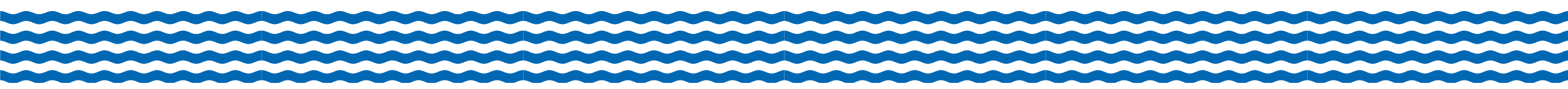


Tennis:

- It is assumed that approximately 60-70% of the tennis court users are Mercer Island residents. Tennis

Primary concerns and feedback from tennis:

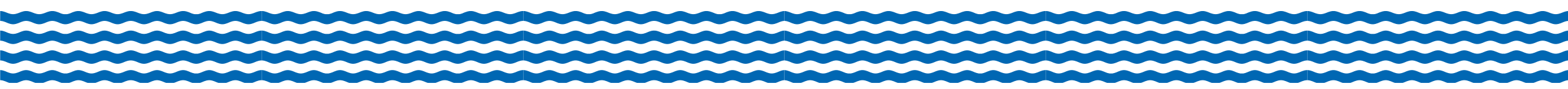
- Unauthorized private instruction occurring on public courts.
- Pickleball players marking or modifying tennis courts for dual use without authorization.
- Individuals or groups monopolizing courts, limiting fair access for others.



Discussion

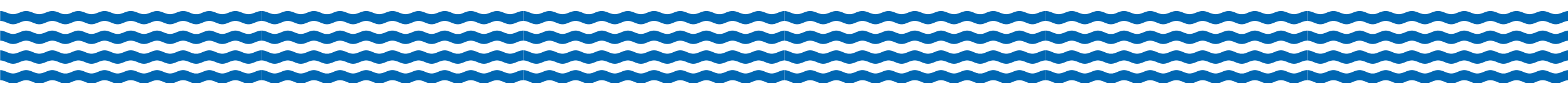
Staff suggestions for policy development:

- Establish clear categories of use: (Drop-in, Hourly Reservations, Special Events)
- Preserve drop-in play as the primary use at all Sport Court facilities.
- Limit events which may adversely impact other park patrons or adjacent facilities by predetermining the allowed size and number of events to be offered annually and monthly.
- Identify specific courts, at specific parks, which may be reserved hourly to enhance access.
- Limit events during peak periods to enable community drop-in access and minimize park impacts.
- Exempt activities coordinated by the City of Mercer Island from the policy.



Discussion Questions

- Should drop-in play be prioritized over other uses?
- Should courts be available for hourly rental by the public or private instructors?
 - Should certain court facilities (or portions of) be dedicated for rentals and others for drop-in use only?
 - Should court reservations be limited to certain times?
- Should tennis or pickleball courts be used for commercial purposes or to conduct fundraising?
- Should reservations and events be restricted during certain seasonal periods?
- Should City coordinated uses be exempt from the policy?



Next Steps

- Staff will compile PRC input
- Develop a draft “Sport Court Use and Allocation Policy”
- Return to a future PRC meeting to review and seek endorsement of the draft policy.

