

Memorandum

To: Blue Lake City Council and
Blue Lake Parks and Recreation

From: Blue Lake Saddle Club

Date: March 20, 2026

Subject: Proposed Fee Increases Across Parks and Recreation Facilities

While the Blue Lake Saddle Club understands and empathizes with the need to increase revenue in the City of Blue Lake, we feel that the proposed increases will effectively harm, or even kill, all existing recreation programs. While we do not agree with the increases across the board, we will limit our comments specifically to the Blue Lake Arena fees.

We appreciate the time and effort Emily Wood has taken to revise the proposed fee increase schedule; however, it is important that only “like” facilities be used to compare fee structures. Humboldt County cannot be considered equivalent to counties such as Sonoma, San Joaquin, San Francisco, and Alameda, among others. Those are large counties with higher pay scales and the cost of participating in equine activities in those areas is astronomically more expensive. We believe there are only two equine facilities that should be used as a comparison to the Blue Lake Arena which allow use by individuals and sponsor events.

1. Orick Rodeo Grounds. This facility, located in Orick, California, is owned and operated by Orick Chamber of Commerce. It offers many more amenities than Blue Lake: 17 pens for camping, electricity, running water for troughs or to wash your horse, restrooms with showers, access to Redwood National Park trails, access to Pacific Ocean beach riding, as well as a full sized arena and dry camping. There is an overnight camping fee of \$15 and a day use fee of \$5 for parking.
2. McKinleyville Rodeo Grounds (MRA). This property is owned by the County of Humboldt and the facility is owned and operated by the McKinleyville Rodeo Association. The grounds consist of a large roping arena, bathrooms, electricity, cook shack, and announcer’s booth. This organization requires a \$25 annual membership fee for individuals to drop in and use the facility at any time. The base daily rental fee for events is \$150 a day; however, there is a sliding scale for use based on rental providing reciprocal services or work. There is no parking fee.

Events that the BLSC sponsor are geared toward fun, family, equine activities. The Saddle Club is diligent, year round, staying on top of the maintenance of the arena: dragging, watering, clearing brush, pulling weeds, repairing broken fencing, and picking up garbage. We have purchased and installed a removable round pen that provides additional opportunities for individuals to work with their horse. Each event brings visitors to the City, which increases visits to local businesses. The trail to the river, to the brewery, distillery, and other locations also brings in additional tax revenue.

Events sponsored by the Saddle Club are not huge money makers. The majority of events barely break even. At the present time, any given show would have approximately 15 competitors with accompanying family members and/or friends. Expenses including insurance, judging fees, and awards eat most of the income. We have been lucky enough to make enough profit, combined with other donations and fundraisers, to cover our insurance premium which is approximately \$1,200 annually.

The BLSC proposes that the Horse Arena Fees be nominally increased to \$75 per half day and \$125 for full day. There should be no parking fee. We would also propose that the arena area be used only as intended when the property was donated to the city—as an equine arena. The arena and/or grass area should not be used for any event other than an equine event. Equine events primarily require trailering in and without the grass area to park a horse trailer, there will not be any use of the arena itself. We believe the only exception to this should be the Medieval Festival which should be grandfathered in and can technically be considered an equine event since the arena is being used for equine exhibitions.

Further, we believe the City should consider how to cover the cost and provide a Porta Potty to the Arena area. The prior unit was in constant use between the pickle ball players, the tennis players, the basketball players, the horseshoe group, hikers, bikers, mothers and baby strollers, and just individuals that stop specifically to use the porta potty. A park facility with this much use should definitely provide bathroom facilities.

If you have any questions or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me, on behalf of the Blue Lake Saddle Club.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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