



Peninsula Metropolitan Park District

PO Box 425 – Gig Harbor, WA 98335
 253-858-3400 – info@penmetparks.org
www.penmetparks.org

STUDY SESSION MINUTES

March 17, 2026, 5:00 PM

PenMet Parks District Headquarters - 2416 14th Ave NW, Gig Harbor WA 98335

Clerk Grimmer assumed presiding duties in President Sehmel’s absence.

Commissioner Roll Call:

	Present	Excused	Comment
William C. (Billy) Sehmel, President		x	
Kurt Grimmer, Clerk	x		Presiding
Steve Nixon	x		Acting Clerk
Maryellen (Missy) Hill	x		Arrived at 5:04 PM
Laurel Kingsbury	x		

Quorum? Yes

President:

ITEM 1 Board Discussion

1a. Draft Amended Rules for Park Use

Director of Park Services, John Laughery, provides brief presentation regarding Rules of Park Use Draft Amendments. Mark Roberts, legal counsel is also in attendance with legal perspective and updates.

Purpose of Updates: Align District Rules with updated Pierce County Park Code, address modern changes, standardize and memorialize enforcement authority and provide clarity on District’s position, strengthen safety and accessibility for the public.

Mark Roberts notes draft rules have been aligned with Pierce County Code (PCC) Park Rules so that if, in the future, there is a desire to codify them in PCC, it is largely consistent with what is already in place.

Reviews difference between Board adopted park rules and those codified in PCC. Biggest difference, code violators can be ejected for breaking park rules. Generally it is a 1-day time period, as we don’t have a process for civil exclusionary notice – which says depend on severity of infraction, violators can be prohibited from that park or all parks for up to one year; if they return to the park in violation of the notice, that is a criminal act and law enforcement can be called.

Board Question: What does codifying look like? **Answer:** We would have to ask Pierce County to codify and incorporate it, likely as a separate chapter within their code specific to us, that applies to all parks or facilities owned or operated by PenMet Parks.



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Director Laughery reviews planning process which began in October 2025, including scope, objectives, and timeline, including review and analysis of existing regulation and community feedback; researching peer agencies and industry organizations; stakeholders' engagement and draft revisions.

Comparison of existing 2013 Park Use regulations and proposed 2026 Rules for Park Use looks at Regulatory, Enforcement Approach, Administrative Authority, Rules, Modern Issues, and Code Alignment.

Key Takeaways: Updated Rules for Park Use transition the District from a primarily enforcement-based rule set, loosely aligned with 2013 Pierce County Park Code to a modern governance framework that allows the District to manage parks proactively while maintaining clear legal authority and enforcement. The original adopted directed to maintain consistency with PCC 14.08, and periodic reviews; many best practices and Recreational uses have evolved.

Board Question: How will this affect us operationally, and for Staff? Will it be a see and say something process for staff onsite where they approach violators? **Answer:** If staff sees someone violating policy, we want to train them to make clear decisions on whether they are comfortable approaching that person and advising them of rules, or if it is something they should contact law enforcement officers (LEO) about; reality is, we will err on side of calling LEO more frequently than staff direct engagement, taking extra care not to put them in a situation where they aren't comfortable and have an alternative. From our perspective; day to day operations will continue, we will not be enforcers, we will focus on education if appropriate; what you will see is more public communication on clear rules and a more clearly defined processes on what is permissible with permission.

Director Laughery identifies key themes found through research including emerging issues addressed by other park agencies, operational and safety conditions and administrative improvements.

Community issue and request patterns, reviewed and analyzed through customer service comments and complaints were identified as: Behavior, Safety and Enforcement concerns such as electric dirt bikes, off leash dog concerns, trail and parking conflicts, noise complaints; Facility Rentals and Use of Space looked at unpermitted uses, event permits; Wildlife, Environmental and Park conditions included shellfish harvest questions, trees down and hazards, trail maintenance, animal concerns; other Suspicious Activity concerns included suspicious vehicles, activities that seem unpermitted, aggressive park users, inappropriate use of park space.

Board Question: Would camping still be allowed in designated areas?
Answer: Yes, where permitted.

Board Question: In summer some people use portable shade structures, are those lean-tos? **Answer:** No, a lean-to typically has a pole or post with a tarp stretched and fixed to a tree or other items. We would discourage those. Structures with a top, three sides, and the whole front open are okay.



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Director Laughery continues review, looking at organized assemblies and demonstrations, drones or Unmanned Aerial Systems or Vehicles (UAS/UAV) micromobility devices such as e-bike, scooters, One-Wheels and associated speed and safety; smoking, vaping, cannabis use; camping and structures; wildlife protection; commercial filming and photography; trail safety standards, vehicle definitions, park hours and enforcement structure.

Board Question: Do our policies distinguish between Cushman trail, which is paved, and other forested or natural trail areas? **Answer:** Yes, Cushman is defined and designated as a regional trail.

Board Question: Will we be posting signs on Cushman Trail? **Answer:** We are working separately on our signage master plan now; adoption and application of park rules will be rolled up, incorporated into the master plan.

Board Question: Do these align with the City of Gig Harbor definitions for the regional trail? **Answer:** No specification in Gig Harbor Municipal Code, but they do agree that alignment and parity with regional authority makes a lot of sense; all speed limits will be identical and become a pattern of use. Enforcing trail speed limits is a challenge for all jurisdictions.

Board Question: Could we investigate or explore use of trail cams? **Answer:** Yes, though they also bring a number of concerns with them; such as their connection to a large server that retains all images and has ability to do facial recognition, but there is no prohibition on using them.

Board Comment: If there were complaints in a focused or central area, it might be more cost effective and efficient than patrol costs. **Board Question:** Would our involvement be limited to action on the trail where our property is impacted? **Answer:** Yes.

Next steps include finalizing policy in March 2026, Board adoption in April 2026, Implementation in April – May 2026.

ITEM 2 Adjournment Time: 6:02 PM


BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS MEETING PROCEDURES

The Board of Park Commissioners encourages the public to attend its Board meetings. All persons who attend Board meetings must comply with Board Policy P10-106 providing for the Rules of Decorum at Board Meetings. This Policy is to preserve order and decorum and discourage conduct that disrupts, disturbs, or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of Board meetings. A copy of the policy is available at each meeting and at www.penmetparks.org.

Approved By the Board on April 7, 2026


William C. (Billy) Sehmel, Board President


Kurt Grimmer, Board Clerk


Attest: Amanda Walston, Board Secretary