

APPROVED

March 05 2026

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

BOARD REPORT

NO. 26-055

DATE March 05, 2026

C.D. #

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY – AMENDMENT TO THE SCHEDULE OF RATES AND FEES

B. Aguirre	<u>BA</u>	M. Rudnick	_____
B. Jones	_____	C. Santo Domingo	_____
C. Stoneham	_____	N. Williams	_____



 General Manager

Approved X Disapproved _____ Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Approve amending the Griffith Observatory Rates and Fees schedule as detailed in this Report and as set forth in Attachment 1 of this Report effective upon the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners (Board) approval of this Report; and,
2. Authorize the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) General Manager, or his designee, to make technical corrections as necessary to carry out the intent of this Report

SUMMARY

Griffith Observatory (Observatory) last updated its Rates and Fees in April 2022 (Board Report 22-073). The Observatory now proposes to change filming fees, pursuant to Mayor Bass's Executive Directive No. 11.

RECOMMENDED CHANGES

The recommended changes for the Observatory Rates and Fees document set forth in Attachment 1 are described below.

Commercial Filming Use

In May 2025, Mayor Bass issued Executive Directive No. 11 to strengthen the local film and television industry by lowering costs, streamlining City processes, and expanding access to iconic City-owned locations including Griffith Observatory. Consistent with this directive, the Observatory is adjusting Observatory filming fees and associated parking fees.

Filming Use Fees

Consistent with the Mayor's directive, staff recommends lowering the Standard Use rates of \$15,000 (exterior only) and \$25,000 (exterior and interior) to \$10,000 and \$15,000, respectively. The six-hour exterior rate introduced in 2022 to enable smaller productions to film economically

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is reduced from \$7,500 to \$5,000. The overnight rate introduced in 2022 is reduced from \$15,000 to \$9,000. The Special Use rate range of \$75,000–\$100,000 is also reduced to \$20,000-30,000. This would return them to rates prior to the 2022 change.

In 2022, the Observatory implemented cost recovery fees for paid parking in the Observatory parking lot and on West Observatory Road, ranging from \$7,000 to \$20,000, depending on the category of use. These cost recovery fees will now be on a per space basis as reflected in the 2020 Griffith Park Pay Parking Fees.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

RAP staff has determined this action is not subject to CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c) as it is an activity that will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and consequently is not a project under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378. Therefore, no CEQA determination is required.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Staff estimates an annual loss in revenue from the film fee reductions of \$50,000-100,000.

This report was prepared by Drew Vazinpour, Management Analyst, Griffith Observatory and Mark Pine, Deputy Director, Griffith Observatory.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS/EXHIBITS

- 1) Griffith Observatory amended schedule of Rates and Fees

GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY
(Revised 04/2022) 03/2026

USE POLICIES – GENERAL INFORMATION

Griffith Observatory’s (“Observatory”) mission is inspiring everyone to observe, ponder, and understand the sky, in furtherance of the Department of Recreation and Parks (“RAP”) mission to provide safe, well-maintained and equitable park facilities. The primary use of Griffith Observatory is serving visitors through public operation of the facility, which encompasses public areas of the building and the surrounding grounds, parking lots, and roads. Activities of the Observatory include:

- Programs in the Samuel Oschin Planetarium
- Programs in the Leonard Nimoy Event Horizon
- Public telescope viewing in the domes, on the front lawn, and on the east and west terraces
- Public access to exhibit galleries and staff interpretation
- Public access to the roof and grounds
- Monthly star parties and special observing events hosted by the Observatory and conducted in cooperation with the Los Angeles Astronomical Society, Sidewalk Astronomers, and The Planetary Society
- Monthly meetings of the Los Angeles Astronomical Society
- Meetings of astronomical organizations, conferences, or other related groups
- Special lectures, symposia, or other astronomical programming
- News media activities and coverage, including press conferences
- Special civic events for the City of Los Angeles
- Occasional rentals, commercial filming, and special events

Primary use of the Observatory supports its own activities and those of RAP, which shall take priority over all other uses. The Observatory building is used for public operation on most weekdays and on all weekends. The grounds, roads, and parking lots of the Observatory are generally open daily during Griffith Park hours (5:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.) unless there is a need to close for safety or conducting an event.

Griffith Observatory Foundation—the Observatory’s exclusive and officially-designated non-profit fundraising and support partner—is permitted no-cost use of all Observatory facilities pursuant to its mission to support and exclusively fundraise for the Observatory and defined through its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City, provided such uses neither conflict nor compete with Observatory activities and is subject to availability and prior approval of the Observatory Director. Foundation uses are not rental events as defined elsewhere in this document.

The Observatory will also consider limited commercial filming, rentals, and other permitted activities consistent with Observatory and RAP missions, policies, rules, and regulations.

EVENT RENTALS AND PERMITS

100% of rental fees to be deposited in the Observatory Surcharge Account; 100% of staff fees to be deposited to the Department’s General Fund.

Observatory and RAP programs have priority over any other proposed uses. All prospective rental or permit uses should strive to have a direct relationship to the missions of the

Observatory and RAP including promotion of astronomy, science, or civic responsibility, collaboration on issues in which the Observatory has a functional relationship (such as education), or celebration of Griffith Park, its donor, or the facility.

There are two categories of Rental Use

1. Standard Use. Activities scheduled when the Observatory is not normally open to the public or hosting a school program. Standard use may not be scheduled on City holidays.
2. Special Use. Activities scheduled for weekdays when the Observatory is normally open to the public and would be required to close the building and grounds.

To avoid impact to public operation, the Observatory expects most rental usage will fall into the Standard Use category. Special Use rentals would only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

Those wishing to make rental use of the Observatory must conform to the following policies:

- Event proposal and planning is subject to review by the Observatory Director and RAP executive management final determinations.
- Events should not compete with or disrupt Observatory public programs.
- Events may not charge admission, conduct auctions, or engage in any other fundraising activities, or offer food and beverages or permit any sales outside those coordinated by the Observatory's authorized concessionaires.
- Events may not impose an unreasonable burden on Observatory staff, other Griffith Park facilities, or the surrounding neighborhood.
- Events should not displace or interfere with other Observatory activities.
- Event holder must pay assessed fees in advance of the event.
- In addition to any assessed fees, event holder must reimburse staffing fees to RAP in advance, as specified below.
- Event holder and all on site vendors used for the event, must carry and submit proof of insurance for approval through KwikComply.org.
- Event holders must certify advance agreement to abide by the Observatory's rental provisions and policies. This includes provision for the renter to pay for timely and complete repair of any damage to Observatory building, grounds, or other elements caused by the event.
- Event should be limited to 1000 attendees and 1800 total participants (including attendees and all required staff). If rental furniture is used, the maximum number of attendees may decrease.
- Alcohol service, if applicable, must conclude by 10:00 p.m. and events at which alcohol is served should conclude no later than 10:30 p.m. Exceptions to the 10:00 p.m. cut-off of alcoholic service or 10:30 p.m. event conclusion may be granted only by advance written approval of the Department of Recreation and Parks General Manager. If an event at which alcohol is served occurs during public park operations, service and consumption of alcohol must take place out of public view.

Rental Applications

Those interested in renting the Observatory should consult the rental use page on the Observatory's website: <https://griffithobservatory.org/about/rentals/> The page includes information on how to submit an application for review. Requests received through/by the

Observatory's exclusive catering concessionaire will be referred to the Observatory staff.

All categories of rental use must be configured in either (6) six or (12) twelve-hour increments including-preparation, clean-up, and removal of equipment and rentals, unless otherwise noted. Additional hours may be permitted but must be coordinated in advance at the additional hourly rate.

Rental Use Fees

Rental Fees	STANDARD USE Weekdays when building is CLOSED		SPECIAL USE* Weekdays when building is normally OPEN
	12 Hours	6 Hours	12 Hours
Permitted Hours	(between 7:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.)	(between 7:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.)	(between 7:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.)
Exterior Only Rental Fee (NO Roof Access. Includes use of Historic level restrooms)	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$75,000
Interior & Exterior Rental Fee	\$20,000	N/A	\$100,000
Parking Revenue Recovery (Observatory Lot)**	\$12,500	\$7,000	\$12,500
Parking Revenue Recovery (Observatory Lot & West OBS Rd.)**	\$20,000	N/A	\$20,000
Observatory Revenue Recovery	N/A	N/A	\$20,000
Each Add'l Hour(s)	\$2,000	N/A	\$7,500
Extra Planetarium Show	\$2,500	N/A	\$2,500

* Weekday City Holidays are charged at the Special Use rate.

**Subject to prevailing parking rates

Staffing Fees

Rental uses are required to reimburse the Observatory for the cost of staff needed to monitor the set-up, conduct, and load out of the event as well as vehicle access, parking, guest access and crowd control.

Event Staffing Fees	Exterior Staffing		Exterior & Interior Staffing	
	w/Lawn Perimeter	w/Hilltop Closed	w/Lawn Perimeter	w/Hilltop Closed
Full Day (up to 12 hours)	\$3,000	\$4,500	\$4,500	\$6,000
Partial Day (up to 6 hours)	\$1,500	N/A	N/A	N/A
Extra Hours	\$250	\$350	\$350	\$500
Staffing Surcharge for Events Held on a City Holiday	50%	50%	50%	50%

Mandatory Insurance

Event holder must submit proof of insurance by a licensed carrier to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the City of Los Angeles at least seven days prior to the scheduled event and ensure all vendors hired by event holder providing services at the Observatory submit their insurance as well. The insurance policy must meet all requirements specified by the CAO for such coverage.

COMMERCIAL FILMING USE

100% of filming fees deposited in Observatory Surcharge Account; 100% of staff fees deposited to the Department's General Fund.

Griffith Observatory has a long heritage of commercial filming. The Observatory expects that commercial filming will occur at times with the least impact to public operation.

Process and Scheduling

Those interested in filming at the Observatory should consult the filming page on the Observatory's website: <https://griffithobservatory.org/about/filming/>. The page includes policies, procedures, and information on how to submit an application to the Observatory for review. This application is required to film anywhere on Observatory property and is in addition to a reservation with the Park Film Office (PFO). The Observatory calendar will be a key determinant as to whether filming can occur. Since the Observatory is in service to the public most of the time, consecutive days for filming are unlikely.

Timing - Load-in and load-out is counted as part of the filming time. Special accommodations for load-in and load-out will require advance negotiation. Load-in and load-out are strongly discouraged after 10:30 p.m. or before 6:00 a.m., though on-site set-up may occur during this time.

Parking – Parking is extremely limited. Special arrangements may be required for film crews. No public parking spaces or areas for transit drop-off and pick-up may be taken during operating hours. Filming activities which restrict access on West Observatory Road and/or in the Observatory parking lot will be subject to cost recovery of the paid parking revenue **on a per space basis as reflected in the 2020 Griffith Park Pay Parking Fees.**

Site Visits - Filming requires a mandatory "tech scout" (unless waived by Observatory staff) before any permit issuance. Subsequent technical site visits are also highly recommended.

Filming representatives must submit a detailed plan in advance of the shoot outlining their use of various locations, specifying how they will protect Observatory property, and describing what equipment will be used in each location.

Monitors – There will be Observatory staff monitors present for all phases of the filming activity, including prep, filming, and wrap. These monitors will provide on-site guidance and enforcement of Observatory filming guidelines. All agreements and exceptions must be agreed to in advance and included in the City film permit.

Filming Use Fees

Fees – The fees for commercial filming are listed by category.

- Standard Use: Uses scheduled when the Observatory is not normally open to the public or hosting a school program. (Non-holidays when Observatory is closed)
- Special Use: Weekdays when the Observatory is normally open to the public and Monday holidays when the Observatory is not staffed. Approval of this category of use would require closure of the building. There is no partial day filming under Special Use.

Fees must be paid in full before the film permit can be approved.

FILMING FEES	STANDARD USE Weekdays when building is CLOSED		Overnight Use When Closed the following day	SPECIAL USE* Weekdays when building is OPEN
	15 Hours	6 Hours		15 Hours
Permitted Hours	15 Hours	6 Hours		15 Hours
Permitted Times	(between 7:00 a.m.- 10:00 p.m.)	(between 7:00 a.m.- 10:00 p.m.)	(10:00 p.m.- 7:00 a.m.)	(between 7:00 a.m.- 10:00 p.m.)
Exterior Only Filming Fee (NO Roof Access)	\$15,000 \$10,000	\$7,500 \$5,000	\$15,000 \$9,000	\$75,000 \$20,000
Interior & Exterior Filming Fee	\$25,000 \$15,000	N/A	N/A	\$100,000 \$30,000
Parking Revenue Recovery (Observatory Lot)	\$12,500 Per Space Basis	\$7,000 Per Space Basis	N/A	\$12,500 Per Space Basis

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Parking Revenue Recovery (Observatory Lot & West OBS Rd.)	\$20,000 Per Space Basis	N/A	N/A	\$20,000 Per Space Basis
*Observatory Revenue Recovery	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$20,000
Each Add'l Hour	\$1,500	N/A	N/A	\$7,500

*Observatory Revenue Recovery is charged only when the Observatory would have otherwise been open.

Filming Staffing Fees	Exterior Staffing		Exterior & Interior Staffing	
	w/Lawn Perimeter	w/Hilltop Closed	w/Lawn Perimeter	w/Hilltop Closed
Full Day (up to 15 hours)	\$3,500	\$4,800	\$5,000	\$6,300
Partial Day (up to 6 hours)	\$1,750	N/A	N/A	N/A
Staffing Surcharge for Events Held on a City Holiday	50%	50%	50%	50%
**Extra Hours Staffing per Hour	\$250	\$300	\$350	\$400
Overnight Staffing	\$2,000	N/A	N/A	N/A

** Not available with partial day use.

Liability – The filming company will avoid any activities that may cause injury to any person or damage to the Observatory building, grounds, sidewalks, roadways, or associated areas. Failure at any time to act in such a fashion will be grounds for the Observatory to terminate the shoot.

Filming company must submit required proof of insurance by a licensed carrier to FilmLA.

In the event that problems occur, filming company will be liable for any injury or damage which results from its activities. Filming company will be responsible for funding the timely and complete repair of any damage, to the specifications of the Observatory's technical staff.

Credit – The Observatory asks that credit be given to Griffith Observatory and the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks in the film’s credits.

PHOTOGRAPHY USE PROGRAM

100% of photography fees deposited in Observatory Surcharge Account; 100% of staff fees deposited to the Department’s General Fund.

Griffith Observatory is one of the most photographed buildings in the region. Visitors are free to take pictures for personal use, except inside the Samuel Oschin Planetarium and Leonard Nimoy Event Horizon theater. Those interested in taking pictures for commercial use must receive permission in advance from the Observatory and pull appropriate permits from the Park Film Office.

Commercial Still Photography – Those engaged in commercial still photography must describe clearly the extent of their proposed activities in a photography request form. As with filming, preference will be given to those proposals which do not impact public operations. In the special case of photography, however, consideration will also be given to proposals that do not require “pristine” conditions of the site (i.e., visitor and staff access does not need to be controlled rigorously). Rates for commercial photography are for a four-hour session or any portion thereof. Subsequent time would be charged at the same rate. No videography is permitted during a photo shoot.

Still Photography Fees	STANDARD USE Weekdays when building is CLOSED	SPECIAL USE* **Weekdays when building is normally OPEN
Permitted Hours	up to 4	up to 4
Permitted Times	(between 7:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.)	(between 7:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.)
Exterior Only Photography Fee (NO Roof Access)	\$3,000	\$5,000

* Weekday City Holidays are charged at the Special Use rate.

**Only permitted when there is no impact to public operations.

Still Photography Staffing Fees	Cast & Crew Size		
	1-4 People	5-12 People	over 12 People
4 Hour Period	\$100	\$200	\$300
<i>Staffing Surcharge for Events Held on a City Holiday</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>50%</i>

Exemptions – Fees do not apply or may be waived in the following instances:

- News Media – News media wishing to report from the Observatory or interview Observatory staff members are not subject to fees. News media must coordinate their activities through the Observatory to ensure orderly presence on the Observatory grounds and lack of disruption to Observatory public operation. Requests for interviews with any staff member must be made through the Observatory Director.
- Students – Student filmmakers and photographers may not be subject to production fees, but to qualify they should provide a letter signed by an authorized administrator of the school or institution they attend on official school or institution letterhead. The letter should state that the student is enrolled at the school and is working on an assigned student project which will NOT be presented commercially. The shoot must be of sufficiently modest size as to not disrupt public operation or require staff monitoring.
- Educational Programming – Any bona fide educational production which enhances the image of the Observatory, is related substantively to the Observatory's content and resources, and informs a wide audience regarding these topics may be exempt from fees. In addition, any commercial production in which the Observatory's operations and programming are specifically presented to a wide audience may also be exempted from the fees.
- Interviews with Observatory and RAP Staff – producer wishing to film or photograph an Observatory or RAP staff member in connection with astronomical or other scientific matters or with Observatory or RAP matters may be exempted from the fees. All such interviews must be authorized well in advance by the Observatory Director. If the Observatory or RAP staff member is compensated for such an appearance, the time spent with the production crew is to be considered off-duty.

GENERAL USE PROVISIONS AND BOOKING FEES

1. Catering and Alcohol - All catering services, including beverages, will be provided exclusively by the City's contracted concessionaire for café, carts, and catering unless otherwise negotiated with them. The concessionaire and its employees (and any subcontractors) shall strictly comply with all laws, rules, and regulations applying to the sale and/or service of alcoholic beverages. Sale or dispensing of alcohol is only permitted in connection with private approved events; no alcoholic beverage will be sold or supplied at the café or from carts to the general public. Service of alcohol at catered events should conclude at least one-half hour before the scheduled end of the event and no later than 10:00 p.m. and events at which alcohol is served must conclude no later than 10:30 p.m. Exceptions to the 10:00 p.m. cut off of alcoholic service or 10:30 p.m. event conclusion may be granted only by the expressed written approval of the Department of Recreation and Parks General Manager. If an event at which alcohol is served occurs during public operations, service and consumption of alcohol must take place out of public view. There should be no more than 26 significant events per year at which alcohol is served, where a "significant" event is defined as occurring anywhere in the building other than the classroom or conference room. Alcohol service and consumption must take place in areas within or directly adjacent to the Observatory building (i.e., no alcohol consumption is permitted in the parking lot, roads, trails, or exterior restroom area). Event organizers are responsible for ensuring there is appropriate effort to prohibit service to underage persons.
2. Merchandise and Sales - Official Observatory merchandise is provided exclusively by the City's contracted Stellar Emporium concessionaire.

3. Print Materials - The Observatory reserves the right to request advance copies of all publications, marketing materials, programs, advertisements, or other communications relating to the event. Use of the Observatory name, logo, or image, in any way other than as address or directional information requires advance approval by the Observatory.
4. Parking - Parking is extremely limited. Event organizer should make their own offsite parking arrangements and shuttle capabilities which may be subject to additional charges. Use of paid parking on West Observatory Road and/or the Observatory parking lot is subject to cost recovery. A parking and traffic plan must be prepared and submitted by event organizer for Observatory and Park Services review and approval well in advance of any event.
5. Security – For every 100 attendees expected, the permittee shall provide the services of one unarmed uniformed security officer.
6. Noise – Events shall avoid the use of amplified sound outside the building to the extent possible. If amplified sound is required, it must be set at a level that cannot be detected by the neighborhood.

Rental Event Booking and Cancellation Policies and Fees

100% of rental event cancellation fees to be deposited in the Observatory Surcharge Account.

Those wishing to make Rental Event use of the Observatory facilities will need to follow these booking and cancellation policies:

- Events may be booked up to one year in advance only.
 - To hold a reservation, 20% of the base rental of fee must be paid as a deposit.
 - The total amount of all rental fees shall be due at least 30 days prior to the scheduled date of use.
- Fee for cancellation of all rental uses:
 - Within 60 days of event: 20% of the base rental fee
 - Over 60 days prior to event: \$1,000

SAMUEL OSCHIN PLANETARIUM SHOWS

40% to be deposited in the Observatory Surcharge Account 60% to be deposited to the Department's General Fund.

- Adults \$10.00 (younger than 55 years old)
- Seniors \$8.00 (age 55 and older)
- Students & Teachers \$8.00 (valid, current school identification required)
- Children \$6.00
- Foundation Member Adults \$6.00 (valid Foundation membership card at purchase)

The Observatory may provide complimentary admission on rare occasions to high-level Foundation members and to Observatory special guests, dignitaries, astronomical colleagues, and distinguished persons subject to advance written request approved by the Observatory Director or Deputy Director and recorded in an operational log.

With advance notice and approval of the Observatory Director, it may be possible to buy out one

show in the Samuel Oschin Planetarium each day. Fees for show buyouts: are \$3,000 per show.

LEONARD NIMOY EVENT HORIZON PROGRAMMING

40% to be deposited in the Observatory Surcharge Account; 60% to be deposited in the Department’s General Fund.

On occasion, the Observatory may choose to hold fee-based events in the Leonard Nimoy Event Horizon Theater.

- Adults \$7.00 (younger than 55 years old)
- Seniors \$5.00 (age 55 and older)
- Students & Teachers \$5.00 (valid, current school identification required)
- Children \$3.00
- Foundation Member Adults \$5.00 (valid Foundation membership card at purchase)

Foundation members may also receive preferential seating.

GRIFFITH OBSERVER

40% to be deposited in the Observatory Surcharge Account; 60% to be deposited in the Department’s General Fund.

New Rates take effect on July 1, 2022.

Individual Issues: (Sales tax and shipping not included)

Individual Issues (Current Year)	\$3.50 each (plus shipping and sales tax for CA residents)
Back Issues (Previous Year) **	\$5.00 each (plus shipping and sales tax for CA residents)
Out of Print Issues (Photocopy)	\$10.00 each (plus shipping)

Subscriptions: (One Year, 12 Monthly Issues) – not subject to sales tax

	<u>1 Year</u>	<u>Agency Rates</u>
U.S., Third Class Mail	\$25	\$23
U.S., First Class Mail	\$35	\$33
Canada, Air Mail	\$40	\$38
International (other than Canada), Air Mail	\$50	\$48

**Director may classify certain issues as excess and allow them to be sold at their cover price until backlog is reduced to regular level. The price would then revert to the \$5.00 rate. Director may also distribute excess issues free until regular level is reached.

Special subscription rates:

Griffith Observatory Foundation
 Los Angeles Astronomical Society (LAAS) \$1.50 per issue billed quarterly

OBSERVATORY SURCHARGE ACCOUNT

Observatory Surcharge Account funds are intended to provide a capital maintenance and improvement account for the many unique, expensive, and absolutely vital high technology elements that were purchased as part of the Observatory renovation and expansion and subsequent operation. The significant majority of funding would be used to maintain the Samuel Oschin Planetarium and, thus, its ability to provide public programming and to generate associated revenue.

60% ~~40%~~ of revenues from the Samuel Oschin Planetarium and Leonard Nimoy Event Horizon tickets are deposited to go to the Observatory Surcharge Account; as do ~~40%~~ of revenue for *Griffith Observers* and Certified Astronomical letters.

100% of rental or filming fees go to the Observatory Surcharge account.

CERTIFIED ASTRONOMICAL LETTERS

40% to be deposited in the Observatory Surcharge Account; 60% to be deposited in the Department's General Fund.

Attorney's law offices and insurance companies shall be charged a minimum fee for Certified Astronomical Letters of \$200.