



Staff Report for Council Meeting

Date of Meeting: July 6, 2022

Report Number: SRPI.22.087

Department: Planning and Infrastructure

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: **SRPI.22.087 – Response to Motion – Community Pickleball Facility Location**

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide information in response to the Council resolution approved on April 13, 2022 regarding options to build a community pickleball facility in Richmond Hill.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Staff Report SRPI.22.087 be received for information.
- b) That staff be directed to prepare a design project, including neighbourhood consultation, with appropriate budget in the proposed 2023 Capital Budget requests to locate a community pickleball facility in the “panhandle” of Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory Park.

Contact Person:

Michelle Dobbie, Manager, Park and Natural Heritage Planning, extension 2467

Mohammad Kashani, Manager, Design and Construction, extension 5479

Patrick Lee, Director, Policy Planning, extension 2420

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Kelvin Kwan, Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure

Approved by: Darlene Joslin, Interim City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

Page 2

Background:

On April 13, 2022 Council passed the following resolution regarding investigations related to the development of a community pickleball facility:

“That staff be directed to study and report back before the summer recess on options to build a world-class 20 court pickleball facility including: possible locations that would ensure between 50m and 100m distance from residents; a location preferably near major transit hubs such as regional roads; the costs, if required, to acquire land to provide a suitable facility that meets these criteria; and options to provide either an outdoor facility (with the option for a bubble) and or indoor/outdoor facility.”

The following report provides recommended direction on the location, process and timing of the development of a community pickleball facility.

Locations to build a Community Pickleball Facility

As was noted in the April 13, 2022 staff report, available at the following link on the City’s website: [SRPI.22.049 Response to Council Motion: Pickleball in Richmond Hill \(escribemeetings.com\)](#), a community pickleball facility requires a park block that is large enough to accommodate the following:

- A suitable number of dedicated/purpose built pickleball courts,
- A club house,
- A combination of on-site parking and surrounding street parking given this will likely be a drive-to facility for most residents,
- Comfort elements such as trees and other landscaping, benches, tables and umbrellas or other shade structures and potentially washrooms, and
- Sufficient area to ensure the pickleball courts are buffered from any adjacent residential lots given the noise that would result from a pickleball facility.

Staff reviewed City-owned parklands with spaces that are large enough to accommodate between 10 to 20 purpose-built pickleball courts, along with providing appropriate buffer distances from adjacent residential lots and space for comfort amenities such as parking, a club house, trees and other landscaping, benches, tables and umbrellas or other shade structures and potentially washrooms. The following parks were reviewed but have been excluded as options for the reasons noted below:

- Phyllis Rawlinson Park was reviewed but excluded from the options given the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan limits the uses permitted within this park to passive park uses only (pickleball courts are considered an active park use).
- Richmond Green Park was reviewed but excluded from the options given the only area of Richmond Green that is un-programmed and is large enough, is the City’s snow storage area. Construction of a community pickleball facility in this area would facilitate the need to find another snow storage area.

Page 3

- Brodie House Parkette at 9481 Leslie Street was reviewed but excluded from the options given the complexities associated with repurposing the designated heritage house and the studies required to confirm the extent of what appears to be a wetland or historic drainage constraint in the north-east corner of the park.

In light of the foregoing, one option was identified, as is outlined in the following section.

Utilize a portion of the Panhandle of Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory (DDO) Park to create a Purpose-built Community Pickleball Facility

The Richmond Hill DDO Park Master Plan (approved by Council in 2016) recommends four tennis courts, tentatively scheduled for 2032, on the panhandle lands north of Elvis Stojko Arena. These lands offer a number of advantages in terms of siting either tennis courts or a purpose-built community pickleball facility including access to parking, proximity to transit services and the future residential population that will be accommodated along the growing Yonge Street corridor, and adequate buffer distances from adjacent residential lots.

The Richmond Hill DDO Park Steering Committee will need to be advised in terms of providing a multi-court community pickleball facility in this location, instead of the currently planned four tennis courts (see Map 1). Staff note that there are other new growth parks the City is aiming to secure where the four tennis courts currently planned at Richmond Hill DDO Park could be provided if required.

In terms of the pros and cons of providing a community pickleball facility on this portion of the panhandle of Richmond Hill DDO Park, staff offer the following observations:

Playability – this site could accommodate a community pickleball facility with between 12-15 courts. Substantial grading and/or terracing of the site would be required to ensure the courts and parking area are graded effectively. Structural retaining walls will be required as well as significant tree removals due to the larger footprint required. A detailed design exercise will confirm the number of pickleball courts that can be provided (i.e. 12 or 15 courts).

Parking – A community pickleball facility requires the construction of a large parking lot within the panhandle area. The parking spaces required per court will be confirmed in the traffic and parking study currently being undertaken to evaluate the parking demand at the various stages of the Richmond Hill DDO Park implementation. The study will review the parking requirements to determine if the 104 parking spaces provided in the Master Plan (i.e. 50 parking spaces at the relocated Observatory parking lot, 20 parking spaces at Elms Lea and 34 parking spaces on the ring road planned for the panhandle) is sufficient to meet the demand.

Buffer requirements – the panhandle area of Richmond Hill DDO Park is located adjacent to a residential area on the west side and a school on the east side. Should the area on the east side of the planned panhandle drive be used for a

Page 4

community pickleball facility, it would be approximately 60 metres from the existing residential lots to the west side of the park, and over 100 metres from the existing residential lots to the east of the school site directly adjacent to the park. Public consultation – the Richmond Hill DDO Park Steering Committee will need to be advised in terms of providing a community pickleball facility in this location rather than tennis courts. The design stage will include neighbourhood consultation.

Timing – the required site servicing (i.e. watermain, sanitary and storm sewers, fiber optic and electrical) and planned panhandle drive that runs up the centre of the panhandle lands must be completed before the community pickleball facility can be installed. These works are currently in design to 2023 with construction projected in 2024-2025. It would be prudent to consider revisiting the design of the ring road in order to explore options to minimize the extent of earth works and tree removals related to the community pickleball facility.

A number of studies would also need to be completed prior to construction of a community pickleball facility on the panhandle of Richmond Hill DDO Park, namely:

- Topographic survey, which has been initiated as part of the on-going site servicing project;
- Confirmation of archaeological clearance prior to re-grading the site;
- Traffic and parking studies; and
- Geotechnical investigation for earthworks and retaining wall design.

Staff could prepare a design project which included this scope and appropriate budget in the proposed 2023 Capital Budget requests.

It should be noted that in order to advance the design and construction of the community pickleball facility, the construction timing of other passive park facilities in the Richmond Hill DDO Park such as the playground, water play element, and picnic area, will need to be deferred to a later year.

Staff recommend the design of the panhandle drive/ring road be revisited to explore other options to minimize the extent of earth works and tree removals, maintain as much as possible of the open lawn area that is utilized by residents for passive recreation and to minimize the amount of paved/hard surfacing in the park. For example, the ring road could be reduced in size to become a small turn around/drop off area, which would allow the community pickleball facility to move further north away from the slope in the south and existing vegetation (See Map 1).

Given the information before staff at this time, the timeline to construct a community pickleball facility on the panhandle lands of Richmond Hill DDO Park can begin with design in 2023-24 and construction in 2025.

Page 5

Meeting with representatives of the Pickleball Richmond Hill Network and the Tennis Advisory Committee

Staff met with representatives of the Pickleball Richmond Hill Network on June 8, 2022 and provided further updates on June 22, 2022. Staff also met with representatives of the Tennis Advisory Committee on June 16, 2022. Staff explained the analysis of the park sites reviewed and the option noted above. The Tennis Advisory Committee voiced their support for relocating the four proposed tennis courts to another location in order to enable a community pickleball facility to be considered on the Richmond Hill DDO Park panhandle lands. The Pickleball Richmond Hill Network indicated that the proposed location on the Richmond Hill DDO Park panhandle lands appears compelling. There was some discussion regarding the amount of noise that would be generated, court spacing, access points, and the type of lighting that should be installed. These matters will be addressed through the detailed design stage.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

Staff Report SRPI.22.087 will be used to inform the City's Capital Forecast and the annual Capital Budget process. There are no immediate staffing or financial implications associated with this report.

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

Balancing Growth and Green

Providing facilities in proximity to the growth corridor and transit facilities in response to demand and ensuring that such facilities are geographically dispersed aids the City in balancing growth and green by providing opportunities for residents to walk or take transit to park facilities. Furthermore, taking the time to undertake a detailed design project will allow the City to ensure that the least amount of earthworks and tree removals are required to construct the facility.

Fiscal Responsibility

Providing purpose built facilities through a Capital Budget forecast is a fiscally responsible approach to ensuring the City's park system is planned, designed, built and maintained effectively.

Sense of Belonging

Providing facilities in response to demand and ensuring an appropriate public consultation process aids in maintaining a sense of place within the community.

Getting Around the City

Creating geographically dispersed facilities makes it easier for residents to recreate across the City.

Page 6

Climate Change Considerations:

The way we plan and design parks and the facilities within them impacts the City's larger greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and how vulnerable the City and its residents are to the impacts of climate change. The 2022 Parks Plan approved by Council on June 22, 2022 provides direction for a climate change lens to be applied to the development and redevelopment of parks including facilities like those noted in this staff report. For example, by considering the need for a club house and how to preserve as many trees as possible in areas where new pickleball courts are added, the impact of the urban heat island on residents using these facilities is mitigated.

Conclusion:

This staff report has identified the panhandle lands of Richmond Hill DDO Park as a suitable location for a community pickleball facility within Richmond Hill, including the timing of designing and constructing such a facility. Given the information before staff at this time, the timeline to construct a community pickleball facility on the panhandle lands of Richmond Hill DDO Park can begin with design in 2023-24 and construction in 2025.

Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. All attachments have been reviewed and made accessible. If you require an alternative format please call the contact person listed in this document.

- Map 1 – Proposed Community Pickleball Facility (up to 15 courts)

Page 7

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPI.22.087- Response to Motion - Community Pickleball Facility Location.docx
Attachments:	- Map 1_DDO_Community Pickleball Facility_AODA Final.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jun 28, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Patrick Lee - Jun 28, 2022 - 9:56 AM

Kelvin Kwan - Jun 28, 2022 - 10:06 AM

Gigi Li - Jun 28, 2022 - 10:13 AM

Darlene Joslin - Jun 28, 2022 - 10:27 AM