



Staff Report for Committee of the Whole Meeting

Date of Meeting: July 5, 2023

Report Number: SRPI.23.063

Department: Planning and Infrastructure

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: **SRPI.23.063 – Request for Direction: Community Pickleball Hub Planning**

Purpose:

To recommend that a detailed analysis of the City's combined tennis and pickleball needs be undertaken through the preparation of the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy directed by the 2022 Parks Plan. This analysis is recommended to be completed prior to any future implementation of outdoor recreation facilities on the Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory Park panhandle lands to allow time to monitor the impact of the outdoor pickleball improvements being made between 2022 and 2024.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Staff Report SRPI.23.063 regarding Community Pickleball Hub Planning be received.
- b) That staff be directed to prepare a 2025 Capital Budget request to initiate the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy.
- c) That \$280,200 from the Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Reserve Fund be allocated to a capital account to facilitate seasonal operation of the ten (10) pickleball courts at Richmond Green and pickleball planning to 2026.
- d) That the Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory Park community pickleball hub be paused to allow time to monitor the impact of the outdoor pickleball facility improvements being made between 2022 and 2024, and to facilitate further detailed analysis of the City's combined tennis and pickleball needs through the preparation of the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy directed by the 2022 Parks Plan.

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Report Approval:

Submitted by: Kelvin Kwan, Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure

Approved by: Darlene Joslin, 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.

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Background:

The City of Richmond Hill continues to increase the number of available pickleball courts for residents to enjoy

Currently, the City has two dedicated outdoor pickleball courts located at Kings College Park, achieving a service level of one dedicated pickleball court per 107,000 residents. This service level improves to one court per 53,500 residents once factoring in the two tennis courts that have been re-lined to facilitate both tennis and pickleball play at Town Park. The City currently offers indoor pickleball drop-in programs at City facilities including Rouge Woods Community Centre, Bayview Hill Community Centre, McConaghy Centre and Oak Ridges Community Centre.

To address the growing demand for pickleball, in 2022 the City installed ten seasonal pickleball courts at Richmond Green Park and added no volley zone lines to the badminton courts at Rouge Woods to enable additional indoor and outdoor pickleball play.

In 2023, the City initiated a Pickleball Relinings Survey, which ran from January 17, 2023 to February 3, 2023, to obtain public feedback on relining the two existing tennis courts at Morgan Boyle Park and the three existing tennis courts at Grovewood Park to allow both tennis and pickleball play. 942 responses were received to this survey. In response to the findings of the survey, one existing tennis court at Morgan Boyle Park and one existing tennis court at Grovewood Park will be re-lined in 2023 to allow both tennis and pickleball play. The ten seasonal pickleball courts at Richmond Green Park will also be re-installed in 2023.

In addition, four new outdoor pickleball courts will be constructed in 2024 as part of the Bayview Hill Park Revitalization.

Council provided direction on June 22, 2022 with respect to the provision of outdoor pickleball courts in the City's 2022 Parks Plan

When Council approved the 2022 Parks Plan on June 22, 2022, three (3) directions were provided with respect to the provision of outdoor pickleball courts in City parks, as noted below:

- “The City will undertake a data collection exercise to determine tennis court usage levels during daytime, evening, weekend, and weekdays with an intended outcome being the identification of courts suitable to be re-lined for both tennis and pickleball and/or repurposing of underutilized tennis courts to dedicated pickleball courts to improve overall court utilization. Depending on the outcome of this analysis, the City will consider updating the Tennis Strategy to be a combined Tennis/Pickleball Strategy.” (see Section 4.3(2) of the Plan)

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- “In advance of the usage analysis, the City will continue to monitor the supply and demand of pickleball courts and should demand continue, the City will plan to construct dedicated pickleball courts, preferably at Community or Destination Parks and the City may establish temporary/seasonal “pop-up” pickleball courts in Community or Destination Parks where there are limited impacts to adjacent residential lots, or re-line existing tennis courts to facilitate both tennis and pickleball, subject to community consultation.” (see Section 4.3(4) of the Plan)
- “The City will investigate the location, design and construction of a multi-court pickleball hub or hubs that provides an opportunity to be covered with an air-supported structure to facilitate year-round play.” (see Section 4.3(5) of the Plan)

Following the approval of the 2022 Parks Plan, on July 6, 2022 Council passed the following resolution:

“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.”

Since that time, staff moved forward with undertaking detailed design projects for the community pickleball hub, the panhandle site servicing, and the associated parking/traffic study in Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory Park (RHDDO Park).

Public consultation revealed overall support for the concept of the community pickleball hub at the RHDDO however, concerns were raised regarding the scale of the proposed facility

Public consultation on a 16 court community pickleball hub with associated club house and parking began on February 21, 2023 by posting the preferred concepts and survey on the City website. A communication strategy was developed to notify the public of the Public Information Centre (PIC) for the RHDDO Park held March 9, 2023 and of the survey comment period ending on March 17, 2023. The March 9, 2023 PIC was attended by 136 participants (out of 217 registrants), 10 of which were City staff and consultants. The survey received 690 responses of which 432 or 62.6% were residents of Richmond Hill.

Overall, the 16 court community pickleball hub with associated club house and parking received a 57% in favour rating. However, concerns were raised regarding the scale and potential cost of the proposed community pickleball hub and club house and the associated noise, lighting, and parking/traffic implications on the astronomy and wildlife functions occurring within the portion of RHDDO Park to the north of the panhandle. In addition, respondents expressed an interest in diversifying the court types by including tennis along with pickleball.

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Taken together with the City's on-going planning efforts to incrementally increase the number of pickleball courts within Richmond Hill, these comments provide rationale to support the need for further monitoring and analysis to best determine the appropriate size, composition, and scale of the sport court hub at RHDDO Park.

Additional pickleball facilities are planned in 2023, 2024 and beyond

As noted above, in 2023, the City has plans to reline two additional existing tennis courts to facilitate pickleball play (one at Morgan Boyle Park, and one at Grovewood Park), in response to the public feedback received in the winter 2023 Pickleball Relinings Survey. The ten seasonal pickleball courts at Richmond Green Park will also be re-installed in 2023. In addition, by the fall of 2024, the City hopes to have four pickleball courts constructed at Bayview Hill Park.

Over the longer term, eight pickleball courts are planned at the new parks in North Leslie, Mackenzie Commons (lands south-east of the corner of Major Mackenzie Drive East and Leslie Street), and in Richmond Hill Centre. The emerging Mill Pond Park Revitalization Master Plan is also considering adding two pickleball courts adjacent to the existing tennis courts at Stavert Park as part of its phased revitalization project.

In summary, in the short-term (i.e. by the end of 2024), the City is planning to have six purpose-built pickleball courts, at least four multi-lined tennis/pickleball courts, and to continue to install the ten seasonal pickleball courts at Richmond Green Park. In the more medium to long-term (i.e. by the end of 2033), the City is planning to have sixteen purpose-built pickleball courts, at least four multi-lined tennis/pickleball courts, and to be continuing to install the ten seasonal pickleball courts at Richmond Green Park.

Next Steps:

Given the above considerations, to allow time to monitor the impact of the outdoor pickleball facility improvements being made between 2022 and 2024, staff are recommending a pause on work towards implementing a community pickleball facility in the RHDDO Park panhandle. Such a pause will provide time to monitor the outdoor pickleball facility improvements and undertake detailed analysis of the City's combined tennis and pickleball needs through the preparation of the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy directed by the 2022 Parks Plan. Although this change in process will delay the construction of a new community pickleball hub, it will ensure that a future community pickleball hub as directed by the Parks Plan will appropriately address the needs of the community and the larger vision for RHDDO Park.

Staff recommend the following approach over the next three years to best understand the emerging pickleball needs in Richmond Hill:

- Monitoring the impact of the outdoor pickleball facility improvements being made in 2023 and 2024;

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- Initiating the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy directed by the 2022 Parks Plan in 2025;
- Continuing to operate the seasonal ten pickleball courts at Richmond Green Park until 2026;
- Undertaking two additional Pickleball Relining Surveys by 2025 to determine if there is public interest in relining other existing tennis courts to allow pickleball play in certain neighbourhoods.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

On January 30, 2023 Council received Staff Report SRPI.23.018 which described how Bill 23 changes to the *Development Charges Act* and the *Planning Act* will affect the City's ability to collect Development Charge and Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland revenues. Anticipated revenue losses will require the City to delay construction or seek financing alternatives for growth related infrastructure projects, including outdoor recreation projects such as the proposed 16 court community pickleball hub with associated club house and parking. In light of future funding constraints, now more than ever the City needs to be certain that proposed expenditures address a firmly established need in a fiscally responsible manner.

Council allocated \$800,000 from the Parks and Recreation DC Reserve and the Cash-in-lieu Reserve Fund for this design project. To date, \$388,252.73 or 48.5% has been spent on this project. Through work undertaken in association with the community pickleball hub design, staff gained useful new knowledge. In particular, staff attained knowledge regarding the design of the access road, parking lot, site servicing and storm water management that will be beneficial in the future vision for the panhandle lands following the completion of the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy. Staff are reluctant to proceed with the project given the considerations noted above.

Instead, it is recommended that this project be paused, and that funding in the amount of \$280,200 be approved from the Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Reserve Fund and allocated to a capital account to facilitate the continued seasonal operation of the ten (10) pickleball courts at Richmond Green to 2026 and to undertake two additional Pickleball Relinings Surveys by 2025 to determine if there is public interest in relining other existing tennis courts in certain neighbourhoods.

Staff will prepare a 2025 Capital Budget request to initiate the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy, which will be considered through the annual Capital Plan process.

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

The primary intention of this report is to ensure fiscal responsibility. Pausing work on the community pickleball hub on the panhandle lands of RHDDO Park will allow time to monitor the impact of the outdoor pickleball facility improvements being made between 2022 and 2024 and to undertake further detailed analysis of the City's combined tennis

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and pickleball needs through the preparation of the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy directed by the 2022 Parks Plan.

Climate Change Considerations:

The way we plan and design parks and park facilities impacts the City's larger greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the City's vulnerability 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 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:

To address the growing demand for pickleball, between 2022 and 2024 the City will be undertaking a number of improvements to enable additional outdoor pickleball play. To allow time to monitor the impact of the outdoor pickleball facility improvements being made between 2022 and 2024, staff are recommending a pause on work towards implementing a community pickleball hub in the RHDDO Park panhandle lands. Such a pause will provide time to undertake monitoring of the improvements and detailed analysis of the City's combined tennis and pickleball needs through the preparation of the Tennis and Pickleball Strategy directed by the 2022 Parks Plan. Although this change in process will delay the construction of a new community pickleball hub, it will ensure that a future community pickleball hub as directed by the Parks Plan will appropriately address the needs of the community and the larger vision for RHDDO Park.

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPI.23.063_Request for Direction_Community Pickleball Hub Planning.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Jun 8, 2023

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

Maria Flores - Jun 7, 2023 - 9:49 AM

Kelvin Kwan - Jun 7, 2023 - 7:23 PM

Gigi Li - Jun 8, 2023 - 9:44 AM

Darlene Joslin - Jun 8, 2023 - 3:41 PM