
Abraham Wong

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Richmond Hill, ON

11th July 2023

Richmond Hill City Council

For July 12th, 2023 council meeting
Regarding agenda Item 15.2.3 - Community Pickleball Hub Planning

To all council members,

Here is my pickleball experience and insights that will hopefully help convey the importance of pickleball in our community.

- Pickleball is a sport that promotes social interaction, and community engagement. I've never met and befriended so many fellow residents through any other community programs or activities in the past 20 years living in Richmond Hill. This is my first year playing Pickleball full time, and I intended to pursue this sport competitively. I recently won my first tournament that was held in Oshawa.

We need adequate indoor and outdoor facilities to support our growing pickleball community. The City report focuses on seasonal courts, including the lined tennis courts and pop-up courts (nets not provided) at Richmond Green.

- I've been playing indoor in various private leagues and public RH drop-in sessions in the winter months, but it's really difficult to secure your spot as the demand is much higher than court space available in RH. Our community centers are not able to keep up with the demand, while ensuring other sports and activities also have equal access. My leagues have to seek space in primary schools that do not have dedicated lines or nets, or play in gyms that are not to regulation.
- Although it's nice to have some tennis courts lined for Pickleball, there's no guaranteed court time (as it's shared), and much more difficult to gather in community (when you have to rely on others to bring nets). One of the best features of Pickleball is that you are able to show up at a court, alone by yourself, and you can find random strangers to play an enjoyable game. All you need to bring is a paddle.

Council indicated that these courts were unavailable last year, so we do not need dedicated ones, but there is no mention of indoor options or allocating

more court time at community centres during prime-time hours for residents that work 9-5.

- It's been tough to find outdoor court time during the past couple months once the weather warmed up. It is especially challenging since RH has only 1 outdoor court with lights that's a shared tennis court (Morgan Boyle Park). For those of us who are still in working age (18-65), we are looking for access to consistent court time at night (8-11pm).
- I've been traveling weekly up to Aurora since that's the closest lighted court in the area. My friends also drive out to the newly opened Markham Pickleball courts at Cornell even when the wait line goes up to 6-7 games deep at 10pm on a weeknight.

Additionally, please consider these other factors

- Compared to our neighboring cities, we are falling behind in our city planning. Vaughn is following through with their plans to build 8 dedicated courts by 2024, even after relining 10 additional tennis courts in 2023. Markham's newly opened 8 dedicated courts will be the first of many dedicated courts in their city planning. They have cited the need for long-term sport development support, and investment into active living.
- Not sure if the council has also considered the opportunity lost of being a potential city to host sanctioned tournaments or the revenue generation from such an event. The most recent provincial qualifying tournament for central Ontario was held in Barrie, so people would travel and stay overnight. My club members went to Niagara for a weekend for a tournament, and Guelph just hosted their own Olympic-style festival this past weekend with Pickleball as a featured sport.

Sincerely,



Abraham Wong