



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

FROM: Heather Kaufmann, Community Development Supervisor – Volunteer and Group Support

DATE: February 11, 2021

MEMORANDUM NO.: RP-2021-0001

RE: Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Review

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Members of Council information regarding the Outdoor Pickleball and Tennis Review being undertaken.

BACKGROUND:

The Town of Halton Hills currently maintains an inventory of 14 outdoor courts; 7 dedicated to tennis only, 1 shared use tennis/basketball and 6 shared use tennis/pickleball. It should be noted that because pickleball courts are smaller sized than a traditional tennis court, the 6 shared use tennis/pickleball courts noted above allow for 13 pickleball courts. The Town also offers a variety of indoor drop-in pickleball opportunities on available arena floors. Tennis and pickleball courts are located at Prospect Park, Joseph Gibbons Park, Emmerson Park and Gellert Community Park. Throughout the past several years, pickleball play has continued to increase and staff have been adding opportunities for shared use within our current court amenities. Shared use means that the courts are lined for both sports and portable pickleball nets are used while permanent tennis nets remain.

The Town of Halton Hills provides outdoor tennis and pickleball amenities that ensure opportunities for those who play each sport as well as offer accessible recreation opportunities in neighbourhoods. The distribution and availability of these courts invite drop in participation for the general public while accommodating community clubs and user groups through permit for play and agreements.

In 2020, there was a significant increase in public use of the tennis and pickleball courts in Halton Hills. This increase was essentially due to Covid-19 and the necessity for

outdoor access due to limitations on indoor activities. Staff anticipate similar patterns in 2021 impacting the demand for courts with an earlier than normal spring start up.

Considering the increasing interest and participation in both sports, staff recognize that there are challenges for participants in terms of the amenities that exist currently and the necessity for shared use. Specifically, added pressure on demand for court time and access to portable pickleball nets can be a barrier. In response to all the above, and the projected court needs related to growth identified in the Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan, staff are initiating the Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Review.

COMMENTS:

The intended outcome of the Outdoor Pickleball and Tennis Review is to ensure a clear understanding of demand, establish standards, support user groups, and ultimately assist the Town in responding to the current and future needs for tennis and pickleball. Outlined below are the objectives and deliverables of the review as well as details regarding key stakeholders and associated agreements.

Objectives and Deliverables:

1. Rejuvenation of existing outdoor courts
 - 2021 capital funds and resources are allocated for resurfacing and painting of outdoor courts. Staff are in the process of procuring the work to provide additional pickleball opportunities and improve the playing surface for spring 2021 play at Emmerson Park (6 pickleball courts on the 2 already established tennis courts). These new shared use pickleball courts will bring the total Town inventory to 15 available for use.
 - These 2021 capital funds are also allocated to resurfacing of the Gellert tennis courts with work to commence in the Fall and as confirmed by information acquired through the review.

2. Confirm municipal standards for pickleball and tennis
 - Staff want to ensure there is adequate delivery of programs for each of the clubs activities and space for public general use of the courts.
 - The review of provisional standards and service delivery standards will include a scan of what our municipal partners are providing for both tennis and pickleball sports. This will assess the delivery of their programs including the manner in which they provide access to the courts.
 - Staff will explore operational models in other municipalities (including rules and signage) to confirm any changes to current signage that will encourage respectful use and play in both sports.

3. Support use and accessibility

- Staff will confirm outdoor facility permit requirements and needs of each of the clubs, while integrating with public recreational uses that serve children, youth, adults, older adults, and active families.
- A focus group review with pickleball and tennis user groups will take place to confirm governance, membership and league play models.
- A survey will be on Let's Talk to confirm community use of the courts and the appetite for a lending net and sports equipment program. Once community use is identified in the survey it will help staff determine the level of permitted use for each of the clubs.
- Staff will confirm, develop and update agreements with Pickleball Halton Hills, Halton Hills Tennis Club and other clubs/user groups. Staff will encourage all groups to work within the shared use model which will require good stewardship amongst the groups and ensure cohesion between clubs and the general public.

Stakeholders and Agreements

Pickleball Halton Hills (PHH)

Pickleball Halton Hills (PHH) is working to establish themselves as a more formal league, which will in turn build capacity to collect membership funds and/or leverage funding opportunities from other levels of government.

Staff have received a proposal from Pickleball Halton Hills (PHH). It is the desire of PHH to have Emmerson Park courts be established as dedicated pickleball courts vs. shared use. As outlined in the Recreation and Parks Strategic Plan our goal is to provide recreational opportunities for all and it is important that we continue to support both sports, tennis and pickleball, to ensure residents have access to multiple recreational activities. Considering this, staff are not able to support the proposed removal of the tennis courts at Emmerson Park to establish exclusive pickleball play, however as noted above improvements will be made at this site.

Staff will continue working closely with this group to build capacity in the areas of:

- **Membership** as demonstrated through formalized operations of programs and leagues (building on drop-in round robin play and past organized play at schools/churches)
- **Permitted Play** to demonstrate and confirm level of use and the financial capacity of PHH for booking and payment for use.
- **Governance** as demonstrated through the organizational health of the newly established board and introduced model of PHH.

As noted, staff will involve PHH as a stakeholder for the Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Review. It is our intention that this review will then confirm opportunities for future joint capital initiatives and potential partnerships.

Halton Hills Tennis Club (HHTC)

The Town of Halton Hills renewed the management agreement with the Halton Hills Tennis Club (HHTC) at the Gellert courts in 2015. The agreement will expire in November of 2020. Due to the planned resurfacing of the Gellert courts, Town staff would like to explore usage at these courts in order to determine the best appropriate renewal of agreement between the HHTC and the Town of Halton Hills.

There was an increase in the general public play at the Gellert Tennis Courts in 2020. The club has seen a slight increase in membership over the last 5 years. Their preferred model would be to continue focusing the club/league play at the Gellert courts allowing for coach and volunteer resources in one location. Town staff will continue to engage with Halton Hills Tennis Club throughout the Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Review

Other Organizations and Groups:

Through the Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Review, Town staff will be consulting with the Georgetown Racquet Club as outdoor courts for both tennis and pickleball are provided to their membership. Town staff will also consult and confirm needs from other key stakeholders (the Halton Hills Pickleball Club and Acton Tennis Group).

CONCLUSION:

Staff are working with community stakeholders to complete the Outdoor Tennis and Pickleball Review to understand demand, establish standards and support use. We are committed to providing additional opportunities and improving the playing surface for Spring 2021 play at Emmerson Park and Fall 2021 at the Gellert Court. Staff will ensure Council is apprised of the outcomes later in 2021 and as part of any agreements to be brought forward.

Reviewed and approved by,



Mandy Keller, Senior Manager of Community Development



Warren Harris, Commissioner of Recreation and Parks



Chris Mills, Acting Chief Administrative Officer