

TO: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

FROM: ADAM HOWARD, COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

DATE: APRIL 24, 2018

SUBJECT: PICKLEBALL / TENNIS COURT UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

Staff will be providing a status update on efforts to develop a long term solution for Pickleball play in Palo Alto. No action will be taken by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

BACKGROUND

Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in the country, and has also become popular in Palo Alto. There are currently no dedicated Pickleball courts in Palo Alto, however; Mitchell Park tennis courts 5, 6, and 7 are striped for both tennis and Pickleball. These courts are temporarily converted into Pickleball courts by an organized group of Pickleball players at certain times throughout the week. Since Pickleball courts are smaller than tennis courts, multiple Pickleball games can occur on one tennis court. There is currently no reservation system in place for Pickleball games or tournaments.

Tennis also continues to be a popular and valued sport in Palo Alto, for both youth and adults. There are 30 tennis courts located on City property and 24 tennis courts located on PAUSD property. Lighted courts on City property are located at Mitchell Park (courts 1-7) and Rinconada Park (courts 1-5). The standard practice for municipal tennis courts is to allow private, non-tournament use on a first come/first served basis. Tennis court reservations are only available for Palo Alto Tennis Club and U.S. Tennis Association tournament/match use. Additionally, only 50% of available courts at any location can be reserved at the same time and date. The Mitchell Park, Rinconada and Cubberley Tennis Courts are the most commonly requested tennis courts due to the number of courts grouped together, lights, court conditions and bathroom facilities.

DISCUSSION

In response to the increasing popularity of Pickleball in Palo Alto, staff drafted a preliminary proposal to convert Mitchell Park courts 5, 6, and 7 to Pickleball courts and add a new tennis court at Mitchell Park. The tennis community opposed this due to the net loss in tennis courts. Additionally, since these courts have lights it would have resulted in a loss of available space for evening tennis.

A Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) Ad Hoc subcommittee has been working with City staff to develop a process to identify a long-term solution for Pickleball play. The solution will ideally result in identifying a consistent space for Pickleball to be played that does not result in major impacts to the tennis community. The Ad Hoc and staff, using feedback received to date from both Pickleball and tennis players are preparing several alternatives for review and discussion. A collaborative group consisting of the PRC Ad Hoc, members of the Pickleball and tennis communities and staff will be created and together will review, discuss and refine a proposed solution that will then be reviewed by the broader community and the PRC.

There will be numerous opportunities for the community to provide input and staff will ensure transparency throughout the entire process.