

CITY OF PALO ALTO

To: City of Palo Alto Parks and Recreation Commission

From: Adam Howard, Recreation Supervisor and Field Usage Ad-Hoc Committee

Date: August 28th, 2018

Re: Revised Palo Alto Field and Tennis Court Use Policy – Recommended Changes to include Pickleball Use

Action:

Staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission Recommend City Council Approval of Revisions to the Field and Tennis Court Use Policy to include addition of Pickleball

Background:

The City of Palo Alto has seen an increase in Pickleball players and request for Pickleball space. The Silicon Valley Pickleball Club has been very active in Palo Alto and is currently using Mitchell Park Tennis Courts 5,6,7 on a first-come first-serve basis, which is not supported by the City's current court policy. The Mitchell Park tennis courts are not heavily reserved for USTA match play but are used by drop in players and are the only lit courts in South Palo Alto.

The Silicon Valley Pickleball Club recently received a proclamation from City Council recognizing Pickleball as one of the fastest growing sports with more than 2.5 Million participants. Palo Alto also hosts the Bay Area Senior Games Pickleball matches.

Discussion:

With increased demand for Pickleball, the Community Services Department and the Parks and Recreation Commission began looking into available space to provide designated Pickleball courts. With high demand on Mitchell Park Tennis Courts 5,6,7 by Pickleball, staff proposed converting those courts to permanent Pickleball courts. The proposal was met with heavy resistance from the tennis community, specifically around the idea of losing lit courts and preferring a method that kept the courts available for joint use. As staff continue gathering information and creating additional proposals for permanent space it's important that policy changes are adopted to allow Pickleball use of the courts while also recognizing the value of the lighted courts to the tennis community. The policy change allows for Pickleball to have dedicated play time, reserve space for tournaments and provides the opportunity for evening/night play.

Staff understands that dedicated Pickleball courts are the best solution and are working towards this resolution by evaluating different alternatives. This policy change will legitimize the use of court space for Pickleball in the meantime. Staff is committed to assessing this policy again in six months or less and implementing additional changes as needed.

Summary of Current Policy and Recommended Changes:

Issue	Current Policy	New Policy Recommendations	Comments
Court Usage	Courts are only available for tennis use.	<p>Change language to allow more flexibility on the courts rather than only allowing tennis.</p> <p>Designate priority hours for tennis and Pickleball on Mitchell Park Courts 5/6/7.</p> <p>Any hours not listed in priority hours are available first come first serve</p>	<p>Priority times</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tennis Priority Hours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 4pm-10pm on Tuesday and Thursday ○ 2pm-10pm on Saturday and Sunday • Pickleball Priority Hours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 4pm-10pm on Monday and Wednesday ○ 8am-2pm on Saturday and Sunday
Court reservations/tournaments	Reservations only made for USTA Match Play and Palo Alto Tennis Club weekend/tournament use.	<p>Allow tournament reservations for Pickleball with residency requirements.</p> <p>Allow department to allow special events like Senior Games to reserve more than 50% of courts</p>	Large events have been allowed to reserve more than 50% of courts in the past, this is just updating the policy to reflect current practice.
50% policy	Only 50% of tennis courts can be reserved for USTA Match Play	This policy is not being changed, however, in cases where an odd number of courts exist, the extra court will be left available for drop in use.	Example: 9 available courts, 5 would be reserved, leaving 4 available. Staff will now only reserve 4 courts, leaving 5 available.

Next Steps:

If the PRC approves the staff recommendation, staff will bring the revised policy to City Council for approval.

Updating the court usage policy is an important step; however, there are still additional steps that need to be taken to improve the overall use of courts in Palo Alto.

1. Continue to investigate the addition of dedicated Pickleball courts
2. Examining tennis court fees (comparing neighboring cities)
3. Process for USTA rentals (residency requirements)
4. Investigate adding additional lit courts
5. Change small paddle ball court to official Pickleball courts. Staff to confirm current use of courts.

Attachments:

1. Draft Revisions to Section XII of Field and Tennis Court Use Policy - redlined
2. Draft Revisions to Section XII of Field and Tennis Court Use Policy– clean
3. Current City of Palo Alto Field and Tennis Court Use Policy can be found at <https://cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/61286>