



Tennis and Pickleball Working Group

Summary Report

What, Why, Who of the TPWG

- ▶ **WHAT:** a collaborative approach through which various concerns related to tennis and pickleball availability, equity, access and environmental impact could be addressed
- ▶ **WHY:** high-level problem-solving to inform operational changes and funding allocations to existing and new hard-court surfaces for racquet-based sports
- ▶ **WHO:**

Mona Altschuler Tennis Player and Board Member of the Battle Green Tennis League

Melissa Battite Director, Recreation and Community

Christian Boutwell Recreation Committee Vice Chair

Peter Coleman Assistant Director of Recreation

Rick DeAngelis Recreation Committee Chair

Doreen Karoll Pickleball Player

Hal Miller-Jacobs Pickleball Player

Hien Nguyen Pickleball and Tennis Player

Richard Petrasso Gallagher Courts Abutter, Parker Street Resident

Darren Rough Gallagher Courts Abutter, Parker Street Residents

Eamonn Sheehan Lexington Public Schools Physical Education, Health, & Wellness Coordinator

Claire Sheth Recreation Committee Member, RC Liaison to the TPWG

Bruce Yap Pickleball Player

More Specific Working Group Goals

► Short-Term Considerations

1. Explore opportunities for increasing indoor play during the 2022-2023 winter season and beyond.
2. Identify possible strategies for offsetting the diminished availability of outdoor courts during the Gallagher reconstruction project during the summer/fall 2023 seasons.

► Long-Term Considerations

1. Establish site criteria to guide construction of future racquet-court projects.
2. Identify possible locations for dedicated pickleball court construction project(s).

Existing Conditions: Supply (Outdoor)

Court Name	# of Total Tennis	# Tennis Only	# of Dual-Lined for Pickleball	# of Pickleball Only
Gallagher	10	6	4	0
Clarke	3	0	6	0
Adams	2	0	4	0
Valley	2	0	4	0
Totals	17	6	18	0

The Good	The Challenging
Lexington compares favorably locally and nationally for number of tennis courts/1000 residents (1/1,988)	Primary complex is going off-line for reconstruction from early summer through fall, reducing tennis court availability by 58% and pickleball availability by 22%
Lexington compares favorably locally and nationally for number of pickleball courts/1000 residents (1/1,877)	Primary court complex (Gallagher) is located (well) within 150' of residential abutters
Lexington courts are well-maintained and managed and are robustly utilized by individuals, leagues, high school teams, camps and clinics	None of the pickleball courts are "pickleball only"
	Current court layouts and reservation operations limit opportunity for preferred, "drop-in" pickleball play

Existing Conditions: Supply (Indoor)

	2021	2022
Diamond (3 courts)	M 6-7:30pm Tu 6-8pm Th 6-8pm = 5.5 hrs/wk	Requires prior-registration M 6-7:30 pm and 7:30-9pm Tu 6-8pm and 8-10pm Th 6-8pm and 8-10pm = 11 hrs/wk
Hayden Recreation	0	Requires annual membership-- \$300 adults under 60; \$215 over 60—available to Lexington residents only) FOLLOWS OPEN PLAY FORMAT W/F 6:45-8:00am Tu/Th 12:15-2:45pm; Sa 8:15-9:15am = 9.5 hrs/wk
Grace Chapel	0	Available most weekdays before 3:00pm for a fee of \$140/2 hr session; \$300 safety deposit

The Good	The Challenging
Pickleball easily converts to indoor play- any hard surface can do, nets portable, playing dimensions very manageable	Lexington's indoor gym space is limited. 3 of our 6 elementary gyms are considered undersized- even for basketball
Through combination of recreation staff and volunteer effort, the TPWG was able to almost quadruple the amount of available indoor pickleball b/t 2021/22 and 2022/23	There is significant competition across school, town and private league users for what gym space does exist
The gym at Grace Chapel is a largely untapped resource during the week prior to 3:00 and could be great opportunity for private outreach among pb enthusiasts	There is no obvious town/school-owned resource that can absorb more pickleball at this time

Existing Conditions: Demand

- ▶ Tennis has always been popular within Lexington and disproportionately so to even neighboring communities
- ▶ Sports like golf, tennis, pickleball had meaningful uptick in engagement during COVID-19 pandemic as individuals sought out safe, outdoor, socially distanced recreational options
- ▶ USTA estimates that interest in tennis has increased by 33% since 2020 while pickleball interest has increased by 158% over the same period
- ▶ Both sports have broad appeal across age and gender, but even more so for pickleball which has significantly broad appeal among older players
- ▶ Not all Lexington tennis court-pickleball conversions are viewed equally desirable- courts at Clarke, Valley and Adams are preferred due to ability to use regulation pickleball nets
- ▶ Existing reservation data, though available, is skewed due to propensity of pickleball players to book reservations as tennis in order to access 2 courts. With that in mind, 2021/2022 reservation data suggests a delta of 27,000 tennis reservations to nearly 600 pickleball reservations.

Barriers to Increased Racquet Sport Access

- ▶ Differences in format of play between tennis and pickleball
- ▶ Lexington Recreation and Community Programs reservation and budgeting processes
- ▶ Environmental impact
- ▶ Upcoming Gallagher Court Complex reconstruction project

Working Group Recommendations to Recreation Committee and Staff

Short Term

- ▶ Encourage and support creation of an independent pickleball league (in process!)
- ▶ Incorporate drop-in, “open play”, pickleball format into court allocations as early as possible
 - ▶ Dedicated, alternating, use designations (tennis or pickleball) for set times each week; or
 - ▶ Permitting arrangements with an organized pickleball group
- ▶ Re-line courts at Adams and Valley to accommodate 6 rather than 4 pickleball courts at each location; provide permanent, portable nets at each location (check!)
- ▶ Explore temporary pickleball court options on under-utilized hard-court surfaces
 - ▶ Paint courts on existing hard surfaces (parking lots, underutilized basketball courts)
 - ▶ Purchase and laydown interlocking court “tiles”
- ▶ Continue expanded times at Diamond Middle School in the fall/winter of 2023/2024 and consider converting those offerings to open-play format
- ▶ Consider utilizing indoor spaces (gyms) during the summer season to accommodate more pickleball courts (with understanding that pickleball community prefers outdoor to indoor use during warmer weather)
- ▶ Encourage use of quieter equipment (e.g. paddles)

Recommendations, cont.

Long(er) Term

- ▶ Prioritize and commit to construction of dedicated, permanent, pickleball courts as soon as an appropriate space is identified and funding can be secured.
 - ▶ Re-evaluate existing parks and their feasibility as permanent pickleball court sites
 - ▶ Work with other boards and town departments to identify vacant lots that could accommodate pickleball courts
 - ▶ Advocate for inclusion of pickleball courts during park planning discussions as fields get re-developed
 - ▶ Include consideration of pickleball play feasibility in future indoor recreation space planning (e.g. school building projects)

Site Selection Challenges

- ▶ Funding of larger scale construction projects largely beholden to Lexington's reliance on 5-yr capital planning process and time horizons
- ▶ Open land is at an extreme premium in densely populated Lexington
- ▶ Multiple demands on the open space that does exist
- ▶ Land ownership is complicated (Recreation "owns" some, the Town "owns" some, the schools "own" some)
- ▶ Open land that does exist often surrounded by residential neighborhoods
- ▶ Heavily documented and widely contested impact of pickleball-generated noise on quality of life of abutters to courts, *nationally*
- ▶ Noise mitigation products still largely nascent with some debate as to efficacy

Recommended Dedicated Pickleball Court Site Selection Criteria (new and *existing* sites)

1. Noise level not to exceed 65dBas at abutter line of courts
 - ▶ To achieve this would require a distance to abutter line of > or = 100' with (meaningful) mitigation
 - ▶ To achieve without mitigation would require distance to abutter line of >200'
2. Prioritize capacity of site to accommodate open play format (requires minimum of 4-6 courts)
3. Timing of development is “sooner rather than later”
4. Access to site amenities (toilets, benches, water fountains)
5. Location (equitably accessed across neighborhoods)

Other considered criteria included: limited conflict/displacement with other uses; availability of parking, court orientation relative to sun

To these, Claire has recommended that the Recreation Committee and staff also consider the criteria set forth by the Fairfax County Pickleball Study, included as an attachment to the full report and located in shared Google drive folder

Concluding Thoughts

- ▶ Recreation department is to be commended for its *deliberate* attention to the question of how to *responsibly* increase access to pickleball in town given debates and legal challenges to pickleball court development nationally
- ▶ Given reduction in court availability while Gallagher Complex is off-line, short-term solutions to balance demand for tennis and pickleball, as cited here, should be vigorously explored/pursued
- ▶ Site criteria should be applied to court locations that have already been dual-lined, to ensure they meet acceptable thresholds (e.g. noise implications of pickleball lining at Gallagher Complex)
- ▶ Given rate of growth for both tennis and pickleball, identifying a permanent and dedicated site for pickleball courts should be a meaningful priority for the Recreation Committee. Dedicated pickleball courts will free up access to tennis courts.
- ▶ Pickleball enthusiasts may want to consider opportunities/potential for public-private fundraising opportunities to expedite court construction given the timelines typical of major capital planning projects in Lexington (by virtue of Committee/Town Meeting processes)
- ▶ Pickleball courts are easier to create in “unconventional” locations than tennis courts are. The pickleball community is encouraged to bear that in mind and not let “perfect be the enemy of the good” as possible temporary solutions for increasing access are considered