

**Tennis/Pickleball  
Meeting Minutes  
4/27/2016**

In attendance: Dorothy Stack, Kathleen Pierce, MaryKay Moyer, Debbie Meagher, Julie Shaheen, Deborah Cavanaugh, Bruce Gibbs, Roger Rioux, Elaine Moloney, Susan Steinman, Joe Koslowski, Don Clark, Sarah MacColl & Russell Packett (committee member Tara Simopoulos was absent)

Meeting started at 6:35 by Russell Packett

**Introductions:** Russell introduced the committee members, gave a brief history of the committee. In addition, he shared what the committee was charged with by the Town Council which is to recommend both short and long-term options in regards to the tennis/pickleball issue.

**Background on Tennis-Pickleball court sharing:** Joe Kozlowski gave a brief history of the situation between pickleball and tennis over the past 2 years. 2014 Fort Williams Advisory Commission (FWAC) was asked to line court at the Fort for pickleball. At the time the upper tennis court was lined for pickle ball (1 tennis court can produce 2 pickleball courts). Prior to 2015 the pickleball group asked to have the lower 2 courts at the Fort lined for pickleball too as the group of pickleball players who were regularly playing could not be accommodated on just 2 courts. The FWAC agreed to do that on a trial basis for 2015 and solicited feedback through a survey. In addition, Joe shared that the lower courts are due to be repainted this summer and there needs to be a discussion about what lines end up back on those courts.

**Differences in sports:** Sarah MacColl talked about how the group all understands the differences in the 2 sports/activities and how playing them side-by-side can be difficult, primarily for tennis players.

Some of the differences shared were:

- Different lines on the court leads to confusion for tennis players
- The size of pickleball group playing leads to more people waiting to get onto a court therefore more social and more noise
- The social aspect of pickleball leads to more noise on the court while playing
- Playing noise. Harder racquet and plastic ball leads more noise in actually playing the game
- Length of game. Traditionally the tennis players can play in the 90 minute window of time as signage at the court requires. However, with a large group being able to play pickleball in the same window is almost impossible.

**Discussion:** With the above information as a backdrop the meeting was then opened up to others in attendance under the following guidelines:

- What are other concerns not already discussed
- What suggestions do you have for both short/long term solutions

Roger Rioux talked about the growth of pickleball in the area. He talked about how there is a fairly consistent group of 15-30 who are playing at the Fort regularly. The 90 minute time constraint doesn't work for them as players are rotating in as games conclude. Roger mentioned that the Fort is listed on the State's Pickleball website as a place to play and that the games are open to the public so they may get players from surrounding areas coming to join them. He did not have specific data but suggested anywhere from 1/3 – 1/2 of his participants are Cape residents. This group plays indoors during the winter at the South Portland Community Center.

Don Clark asked for clarification that the pickleball group appears to be much more organized than tennis which appears to be more individualized in its usage. That was confirmed.

Sarah MacColl asked if there are any outdoor courts in South Portland lined for pickleball, Roger responded that at the time no, but that the group has approached them with the suggestions to line outdoor courts.

A question was asked about money changing hands for people to play pickleball. Roger informed the group that last year there was a nominal fee charged in order to defray the costs of buying nets & balls.

Kathleen offered up that a big difference between the two activities was the organization. Pickleball seems to be a large organized group while the tennis players are simply another friend (or 3 other friends) going out to play tennis. This tends to lead to conflict as tennis players show up to play and find the courts filled with pickleball players.

Bruce responded that last year he was over at the Fort a lot playing pickleball and only had a conflict once. Elaine followed up with that comment that said she stopped trying to go out and play after she ran into a group the first time. So that although Roger may have only had one conflict it might have been simply because people stopped trying to go play tennis.

Don brought the discussion back with the question that it appears that the issue at hand is a scheduling issue, am I correct? That question was confirmed by the group. Some additional conversation took place about how when the tennis players show up and find the pickleball players on the courts it leaves them with no place else to play. Dorothy shared that last year there was in fact an informal schedule (tennis M/W/F & pickleball Tu/Th). However, that schedule was agreed upon in a meeting like this and the only people who knew about that schedule were the people who had attended the meeting. Others did not which lead to the conflicts.

Elaine asked since the pickleball group is an organized group whether or not they would fall under the group event policy of the Fort.

Joe reminded the group that the Fort is open to the public regardless of where they come from. In addition, this group is here to figure out a way for pickleball & tennis to coexist. We are all about sharing and maximizing resources.

There was some discussion about use of the HS courts to help alleviate some of the issue.. However, it was pointed out that during the summer between CS Rec Camp and CS Tennis Camps there isn't a suitable block of time that would meet the group's needs.

Julie asked if there were any monies available for grant purposes from the national pickleball organization that would help in creating additional court space. Roger said there is a national group and that if that was the long-term suggestion it is certainly something that could be explored.

Some discussion followed about adding courts someplace else. One of the suggestions was to rehab the basketball court up on the hill and create a 2<sup>nd</sup> tennis court (2 pickleball courts). Joe suggested that while that was a great idea it was more of a long-term solution.

Sarah brought the group back to the task at hand and that is finding a short-term solution in allowing the groups to coexist while pursuing a more long-term solution.

Further discussion followed about lines and whether it was acceptable to have pickleball lines on the tennis courts. Russell shared that there are a number of communities throughout southern Maine that are lining tennis courts with pickleball courts in order to maximize their resources. One of the suggestions Russell offered in regards to the lines was to not use the red lines for the pickleball courts (as currently lined) but follow a recommendation from the USTA about smaller courts within tennis courts and use variable shades of the court color. If the court was repainted blue like the HS courts then the pickleball lines would be a lighter shade of that blue. According to the USTA it minimizes the contrast in line complaint with traditional tennis players.

The conversation returned back to trying to schedule the two groups. A question was asked about reserving the courts. Follow-up discussion resolved that there is currently no mechanism to handle the scheduling or the policing of such a plan. In addition, trying to schedule the courts at the Fort would also impact that family visiting the park who simply wants to use the court.

Discussion followed about alternative locations for pickleball courts in town. Russell said that although there may be some options (the MS basketball court for example) to add pickleball courts there was not a location large enough to meet the needs of the pickleball group (4 pickleball courts side by side).

After discussion about pickleball users/players Sarah asked if we are dancing around the issue at hand for some. That there are many more pickleball players not Cape residents than are Cape residents. The tennis player side of the room agreed that is an issue for them.

Susan asked if it was OK that on a website (pickleball) it lists that there is scheduled pickleball at the Fort. We don't schedule anything else in the park without a fee assigned to it. Roger clarified that the website does not state such a claim. That all it does is who to call FMI.

The following suggestions were made for short-term solutions

- Dorothy suggested pickleball back to the upper court only and they can play 5 days a week.
- MaryKay suggested pickleball moves to Tues/Thur afternoons
- Roger suggested Tennis M/W/F & Pickleball Tue/Thur

Much discussion followed around these 3 concepts. In the end it was agreed that the following recommendation would be made to the Town Council for a short-term solution.

- The lower courts at Fort Williams will be reserved primarily for tennis M/W/F until 11 am.
- The lower courts at Fort Williams will be reserved primarily for pickleball Tu/Th until 11 am
- That signage will be added to the courts to convey the above expectations
- That when the lower courts get repainted this summer that the pickleball lines be placed on the tennis court with such a color to help minimize confusion (see USTA suggestion of similar color to court only shaded)

In addition, the following is being suggested as a long-term solution.

- Rehab the existing basketball court near the upper tennis court. This would mean enlarging the fence area around both courts and creating a new tennis court in place of the old basketball court and lining the new court for pickleball. This would in essence create 4 multi-use courts (4 tennis, 8 pickleball).