

FORMAL REPORT

To:	Mayor Strathdee and Members of Council
Prepared by:	Stephanie Ische, Director of Community Services
Date of Meeting:	22 May 2018
Subject:	DCS 09-2018 Pickleball Lines on the Tennis Courts

PURPOSE

This report presents the recommendation from the Recreation and Leisure Master Plan to add pickleball lines to two existing tennis courts. During the preparation of this report the Director of Community Services had discussions with representatives of both the tennis and pickleball players to make them aware of the Master Plan recommendations and the pending report to Council. Members of both playing communities have indicated a desire to address Council during the “Public Input Period” of the agenda.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT DCS 09-2018 Pickleball Lines on Tennis Courts be received; and

THAT Council approve Recreation and Leisure Master Plan recommendation #48, and that staff be directed to create two multi-purpose courts out of the Town’s existing tennis courts to allow for pickleball play.

BACKGROUND

The Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan was developed to help shape the direction for Recreation and Leisure Services for the next 10 years. The 56 recommendations are a guide to assist Council and the Town administration in its efforts to optimize current recreation services, and to plan for recreation services into the future.

At the March 27, 2018 Council meeting, Council adopted the Recreation and Leisure Plan as presented. Within this plan, there are 56 recommendations. As noted by staff at the time, as needed, the individual recommendations from the Plan would be brought forward to Council for further consideration and direction.

This report speaks to recommendation #48 –Tennis and Pickleball Courts, which recommends that the Town create additional space to play outdoor pickleball by creating two multi-purpose courts out of the Town’s existing tennis courts.

This staff report is presented to facilitate Council’s deliberation of this recommendation. Several options are presented for consideration.

REPORT

Pickleball is a court sport played on a badminton-sized court with the net lowered to 34 inches at the center. It is played with a perforated plastic ball similar to a whiffle ball and wood or composite paddles about twice the size of ping-pong paddles. It can be played indoors or outdoors, is easy for beginners to learn – but can develop into a fast-paced, competitive game for experienced players. The game has developed a reputation for its friendly and social nature.

Pickleball can be played as singles or doubles. New players can learn the game quickly in a single session. No special apparel is needed – just something comfortable and appropriate for a court sport. Equipment is inexpensive and easily portable. The game can be played by all ages and is particularly popular in school Physical Education programs and the older adult population.

In St. Marys, Pickleball play is a fast growing recreation opportunity that is mostly played in the daytime hours. Currently, the Friendship Centre offers a Pickleball program for active adults at the Pyramid Recreation Centre twice a week, along with one evening program at St. Marys D.C.V.I. year round. The development of this program has helped to identify the demand and potential growth of this sport with the municipality. Pickleball members in St. Marys have tripled in size to 52 members over the past three years and staff anticipate this growth to continue because this is a low impact sport that is popular amongst retirees.

The pickleball participant numbers only account for those who register for the program with the Friendship Centre. We have also learned that many residents currently travel outside of St. Marys to fulfill their needs for outdoor play. Staff continue to see an interest in learning this fast growing sport not only from the older adult generation, but a growing interest from all schools. Currently Little Falls students come to the Friendship Centre to learn and play this sport. DCVI has borrowed the pickleball equipment so they can teach teens, from their location, this sport.

The Recreation Master Plan discusses the Town's future needs for recreation facilities, with a section dedicated to tennis courts and pickleball courts. As a part of this discussion, the Recreation and Leisure Master Plan noted that a normal standard to apply to a community is one tennis court per 4,000 to 6,000 residents to determine the overall supply need of tennis courts. Further, from a tennis club perspective, a provision target of one club court for every 100 members is generally used to ensure there is a sufficient number of club courts available. Within the Master Plan report, it was noted that there are currently 45 tennis club members and 52 pickleball members.

Given these standards the Recreation Master Plan found the Town to have an oversupply of tennis courts, and noted that an additional pickleball court would benefit the community as a whole by allowing residents the ability to play within the Town not needing to leave the town boundaries.

Within the Recreation Master Plan there is a further discussion about the benefits and cost efficiencies of multi-sport courts and facilities. When building or restructuring any recreation facilities today it is important to be mindful and evaluate opportunities to increase multi-purpose space. This helps create flexibility to meet the needs of the greatest number of visitors from the widest variety of athletic interests. The purpose of multi-purpose space is to optimize the overall facility space, promoting the most efficient use of building space.

The idea of transforming one or two of the existing tennis courts into multi-use courts with pickleball lines was reviewed during the public engagement portion of the Recreation Master planning process. It was noted during the public consultation sessions that local tennis players did not wish to have pickleball lines painted on the existing courts. It was the preference of the tennis community to have separate pickleball courts constructed for this growing sport. In interest in access to a wintertime facility was also expressed by the tennis players. This is very much a possibility. The Town could purchase a portable net to be used at DCVI or the Community Centre and delineate a court for tennis using taped lines. This mirrors the approach of wintertime play for pickleball.

On the other side of the conversation, during the consultation with Monteith Brown the pickleball players asked for the ability to utilize a couple of the existing tennis courts.

Ultimately, the Recreation Master Plan makes the following recommendation:

Delineate playing boundaries for pickleball on two of the existing tennis courts (tennis court lines are to remain). Consideration should be given to using a distinct boundary colour to differentiate playing areas in order to avoid confusion between the two sports as well as installing a strap system to allow the net to be adjusted. The Town should subsequently monitor utilization, as well as work with the St. Marys Social Tennis Club and pickleball players to ensure that game

scheduling does not conflict between the two activities, particularly during tournaments and special events. The need to expand the supply of outdoor tennis and pickleball courts should be evaluated during an update to the Master Plan, which should be based on court usage and demand.

This recommendation was made by the consultants because this is a more cost effective approach than constructing new pickle ball courts considering the normal supply standards that are applied to communities, and considering the specific membership numbers for tennis and pickleball in St. Marys.

Staff are now seeking direction from Council on how to move forward on this Master Plan recommendation. Staff have presented a number of options to help facilitate Council's direction:

1. Option one- Do nothing:

Leave the tennis courts as they are; do not paint any additional lines; continue pickleball play at the Friendship Center. The advantage of this option is that there would be no cost to the municipality. However, this option does not solve the problem of finding an additional location for pickleball players to play as recommended in the Master Plan.

2. Option two-Paint lines on two of the existing tennis courts:

Per recommendation #48 within the Recreation and Leisure Master Plan, paint two of the existing four tennis courts. The cost of this option is \$1,000 that can be accommodated within the 2018 operating budget.

Attached to this report is a picture of a tennis court with pickle ball lines so that Council can see what the finished product looks like with yellow lines or baby blue lines.

The advantage of this option is cost efficiency by creating a multi-purpose facility. This option would allow both racket sports the ability to play at this location. By providing the opportunity for both sports to be played outside, the goal is to raise the profile of both sports, while further increasing the use of the existing facility. By making two of the four tennis courts multi-purpose courts it would allow tennis the ability to continue to play on four courts and pickleball would have the ability to play on two courts. Should option two be selected, the company that originally resurfaced the courts would be hired to install the new lines.

A concern with this approach is conflicting times of play. Presently, the courts remain open for any residents to utilize many hours of the day, and no user fees are charged by the Town. Currently, the Town respects an arrangement with the St. Marys Social Tennis Group, and blocks off two evenings a week (Tuesday and Thursday) for play and posts these blackout times at the facility. The pickleball players intend to work around the committed times that tennis would use the courts so that there would be no interference in play times between the two groups.

3. Option three-Build standalone pickleball courts:

In this option the Town would construct a standalone pickle ball facility. The advantage of this option is that there would be no conflict of play concerns, and both user groups would have their own dedicated facility.

This option is the highest cost option, with capital construction costs forecasted to be \$125,000 - \$150,000 not including the cost to purchase land (if necessary) or the cost of lights.

As noted, the Master Plan does not recommend this approach because the Town currently has an oversupply of tennis courts based on industry benchmarks and standards.

SUMMARY

Playing either tennis or pickleball regularly will surely help you stay fit and healthy. Racket sports offer something other fitness sports do not, lateral movement. This is a benefit as it helps improve balance and weight shifting which can lower risk of falls. These kinds of activities are also good for your mind.

From a cognitive standpoint, it sharpens your planning and decision-making skills as you constantly anticipate and execute your next shot.

The Recreation Master Plan recommends that the Town provide two outdoor pickleball courts by adding playing lines onto two existing tennis courts. This recommendation was made by the consultants because this is a more cost effective approach than constructing new pickle ball courts considering the normal supply standards that are applied to communities, and considering the specific membership numbers for tennis and pickleball in St. Marys. This strategy responds to pressures for outdoor pickleball courts as it enhances the use of existing municipal recreation facilities, which is one of the primary objectives of the Recreation Master Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- Option one: no financial impact.
- Option two: \$1,000 for line painting.
- Option three: unknown at this time, but forecasted to be \$125,000 - \$150,000 (not including the cost of land or the cost of lights)

STRATEGIC PLAN

☒ This initiative is supported by the following priorities, outcomes, and tactics in the Plan.

- Pillar #4: Culture and Recreation – Recreation Services Master Plan:
 - Outcome: Assessing the real needs of residents in terms of providing the right fit for recreation services provided by the Town will require contracting out for a consultant who specializes in this area given the exhaustive analysis to be performed in providing key recommendations.
 - Tactic: Secure a consultant to complete a recreation master plan, implement the key recommendations as required, develop an inclusion policy, and review the long term effectiveness of the recreation master plan at key points in time to ensure currency and fit with the Town's priorities.

OTHERS CONSULTED

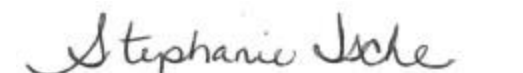
Recreation and Leisure Master Plan
All Lined Up
St. Marys Social Tennis Club
Pickleball Group

ATTACHMENTS

Pictures of pickleball lines painted on tennis courts.

REVIEWED BY

Recommended by the Department



Stephanie Ische
Director of Community Services



Jenny Mikita
Senior Services Supervisor

Recommended by the CAO



Brent Kittmer, CAO / Clerk



Pickleball lines painted yellow



Pickleball lines painted baby blue