

TO: Mayor Colbert and Town Councilmembers

FROM: Leslie Herman, Director Parks & Recreation

DATE: January 3, 2023

SUBJECT: Glyndon Park Pickleball Survey



Glyndon Park tennis/pickleball courts have shared use courts to include 4 pickleball courts and 2 tennis courts. The 2 tennis courts were striped for a total of 4 pickleball courts in 2019 when the courts were refurbished.

The Parks & Recreation Department have received numerous concerns/complaints regarding pickleball at Glyndon Park. The most recent complaint from the Glyndon Park neighbors is the noise from pickleball has ruined the livability of their neighborhood and significantly decreased the value of their homes. The neighbors have requested pickleball be banned from Glyndon Park.

To prepare for a discussion at the Council Conference Session on January 23, 2023, I am including the resident concerns that were received by our department and actions our department took to remedy the concerns. The most recent action includes a survey to the Glyndon Park neighbors and to the pickleball community that are Town residents. The information that follows provides an explanation of how the surveys were developed and a summary of the results.

Also provided is an explanation of pickleball, the current pickleball schedule at Glyndon Park/Meadow Lane Park, why the sound of pickleball is an issue, what can be done to mitigate the noise issues of pickleball, public pickleball courts in neighboring jurisdictions and pickleball studies conducted by local jurisdictions. The Wall Street Journal recently printed an article about the issues of pickleball and neighbors.

Attached please find:

- Pickleball letter and survey to neighbors and the results
- Pickleball survey to resident pickleball players and the results
- Pickleball survey results from non-residents
- Sun City Grand Green Zone Pickleball Paddle List
- Article titled "Pickleball Is Pitting Neighbor Against Neighbor" from The Wall Street Journal, dated December 2, 2022

Staff is looking to council to determine whether to further restrict pickleball play at Glyndon Park.

What is Pickleball?

Pickleball is an indoor or outdoor racquet/paddle sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton, and ping pong. Two players (singles), or four players (doubles), hit a plastic whiffle ball over a 36-inch-high net using solid-faced paddles. Opponents on either side of the net hit the ball back and forth until one side commits a rule infraction. The play experience varies, with some players focusing on the social atmosphere of a casual game and others preferring the fast pace of tournament-style competition. Today, the sport is enjoyed by all ages and skill levels.

Current Pickleball Schedule at Glyndon Park

Mon/Wed 8am – 12noon Pickleball only (4 courts)

Tues/Thurs 8am – 12noon Tennis only (2 courts)

Friday 8am – 12noon Pickleball Courts A1 & A2 (2 courts) and Tennis Court B (1 court)

Reservations: Glyndon Park pickleball and tennis courts are open for Town residents to reserve for no fee, seven days a week. Pickleball courts are open from 12-8 p.m. and Tennis courts are open from 12-10 p.m. Reservations can be made up to 24 hours in advance for a maximum of two hours at one time. Only one reservation per household per day. Court reservation receipts must be shown to validate court reservations. Courts with lights available for reservations from March 1 through Dec. 1. Visit viennava.gov/registration to reserve times.

Current Pickleball Schedule at Meadow Lane Park

There are two shared tennis courts with two pickleball courts. Courts are available first come, first served play unless reserved for a Parks and Recreation class, camp or program. The Parks and Recreation Department has not received complaints about pickleball play at Meadow Lane Park.

Summary of Town Resident Concerns and Staff Actions to date

Concern #1– Complaints from residents and tennis players that they are not getting enough time to play tennis due to the courts being routinely full with pickleball players.

Action #1 –

- Town staff implemented reservations to Town residents only and their guests seven days a week from 12noon to 8pm.
- Open play for tennis and pickleball was restricted to 8am to 12noon on specific days:
 - Pickleball – Monday/Wednesday
 - Tennis – Tuesday/Thursday
 - Tennis/Pickleball – each sport gets a court Saturday and Sunday

Concern #2 - Complaints from neighbors that the sound generated from hitting the pickleball and cheering during the early mornings and late evenings was affecting sleep schedules.

Action #2 – Town staff restricted pickleball play from 8am to 8pm.

Concern #3 – Complaints from neighbors that pickleball players were parking on their streets.

Action #3 –

- Town staff spoke to the Vienna Pickleball Club and the advanced pickleball players to encourage overflow parking at the upper lot of the baseball field.
- Signage to direct players to overflow parking was posted.

Concern #4 – Complaints from neighbors that the noise from pickleball has ruined the livability of their neighborhood and significantly decreased the value of their homes. Request pickleball be banned from Glyndon Park.

Action #4 – This is the most recent concern staff is navigating. Town staff is considering to reduce pickleball play even further. To be equitable to neighbors and the pickleball community, we engaged both groups with surveys as follows:

- Neighborhood Resident Engagement – Town staff sent a letter to the Glyndon Park neighbors nearest to the pickleball/tennis courts with a link to a survey to determine the impact pickleball has on their household and scheduling options for reduced pickleball play, documents attached.
- Pickleball Player Engagement - Once Town staff had consensus from the adjacent neighbors on the reduced pickleball schedule, staff engaged with the Town resident pickleball community to provide the options and gave them an opportunity to weigh in on their schedule preference.

Survey

Survey Development

- Neighborhood Resident Survey - To gauge the impact of pickleball on the residents that live in close proximity to the courts, staff developed a survey to determine whether pickleball negatively affects them, is the current pickleball/tennis schedule acceptable and if residents felt that a pickleball schedule adjustment was needed. They were asked to rank three schedule options. Staff developed the schedule options incorporating “quiet” days, no “pop, pop, pop” that comes from pickleball play.
 - OPTION 1 - Pickleball hours held Monday/Wednesday/Friday from 8am-8pm. No weekend pickleball. Open play for Town residents and non-residents.
 - OPTION 2 - Pickleball hours held Monday/Wednesday from 8am-8pm and Saturday from 8am-5pm. Open play for Town residents and non-residents.
 - OPTION 3 - Pickleball hours held Monday through Friday from 8am to 8pm. No weekend pickleball. Open play 8am – 12noon for Town residents and non-residents. Reservations 12noon to 8pm for Town residents and guests only.
- Pickleball Player Survey - Staff evaluated the feedback from the neighborhood option preference to develop the survey for the Town resident pickleball players. Pickleball survey respondents can choose a schedule option and/or provide a comment. Staff reviewed the pickleball player survey with Tom Warren, the representative from the “Vienna Pickleball Club” as it is known on Facebook. The Vienna Pickleball Club has 835 members on Facebook. Tom acknowledged the survey prior to Town staff releasing it to the public.

Survey Results

Neighborhood Resident Survey and Responses

- Surveys were sent via mail to 34 households that surround Glyndon Park nearest the courts, to include Jean Place NE, Ainstree Ct NE, Sherwood Drive NE and the block of Glyndon St. NE from Ainstree Court to Ayr Hill Ave.
- 17 survey responses were received.
- Of those 17 responses, the neighbors negatively impacted by pickleball are primarily located on Jean Place (5 of the 5 homes) and Ainstree Ct. (3 of the 7 homes), both cul-de-sacs that are adjacent to the courts. One resident on Sherwood Drive and one resident on Glyndon Street reported that pickleball negatively affects them.
- The scheduling consensus of the Ainstree Court, Jean Place and Sherwood Drive respondents was split evenly on the first two options:
 - OPTION 1 - Pickleball hours held Monday/Wednesday/Friday from 8am-8pm. No weekend pickleball.
Open play for Town residents and non-residents.
 - OPTION 2- Pickleball hours held Monday/Wednesday from 8am-8pm and Saturday from 8am-5pm. Open play for Town residents and non-residents.
- Survey Comments/Concerns (summary)
 - Noise
 - equipment noise is unbearable, borderline torture - constant sound of paddle hitting ball
 - people noise - screams of agony or joy depending on the shot
 - pickleball players playing beyond their allotted time of 8am to 8pm
 - We cannot use our outdoor space anymore due to pickleball and cannot open our windows.
 - Parking
 - Parking on residential streets, in front of our house
 - Parking on Glyndon Street makes it difficult for 2 cars in opposite directions to pass through
 - Parking in no parking areas. The entrance to the sidewalk going through the park by the baseball field is often blocked.
 - Players park in no parking zones on Glyndon St. SE
 - Facility
 - The courts are located too close to residential homes and pickleball should not be allowed in such proximity to homes.
 - If courts have to stay open, restrict to town residents and guests.
 - Time restrictions
 - Keep pickleball courts open on weekends.
 - Difficult for tennis players to get on courts due to excessive use by pickleball players
 - Why are non-residents using our courts?
 - The current schedule is fine with us. Play on! We are in favor of people using the courts and the park, and people should be willing to share the parking on the street.
 - This survey is unnecessary! The soft pitter-patter of a pickleball is causing such concern is quite confusing. Especially since the LOUD mulching/shredding of leaves took sooooo

many years and almost 300 signatures just to get your attention! Living next to a park comes with the sounds of pitter-patter and cheering. If that was going to bother someone, they should not have moved next to a park!!! LEAF shredding isn't a park sound! This is so crazy. We live directly next to it and it's just the sound of living next to a park!

- I was annoyed with the players' lack of consideration for our community when their habit was to park on the narrow part of Glyndon rather than bother to park in official Glyndon Park visitor spaces and then follow the short trail to the courts – but that issue seems to have been resolved.

Pickleball Player Survey – Resident Responses

- 89 responses were received from resident pickleball players.
 - 65 residents preferred the scheduling option of Mon/Wed 8am to 8pm & Saturday 8am – 5pm.
 - 18 residents preferred the scheduling option of Mon/Wed/Fri 8am to 8pm with no weekend play.
 - 5 residents did not select a scheduling option as they commented they didn't like either option.
 - 1 resident chose both scheduling options as their second choice.
- Survey and survey results are attached.
- Survey Comments/Concerns (summary)
 - Survey in general
 - This is not a fair survey offering all options.
 - Neither of these options are acceptable.
 - This is a horrible survey.
 - Time restrictions
 - There should be no time restrictions on pickleball play.
 - Should allow weekday and weekend hours to accommodate all players.
 - The Town of Vienna allows construction from 7am -8pm Monday to Friday and from 9am -8pm on Saturday. The same applies for yard work, with the addition of Sunday. The courts should be open from 8am -8pm Monday – Friday and 9am – 8pm on Saturday and Sunday.
 - Cutting hours will make it more difficult for people to play.
 - Forcing advanced and beginner players to share the same facilities at the same time for “open play” means that advanced players will not come, as they cannot be assured of competitive and challenging court play. Every time the Town has restricted pickleball play at Glyndon, it has been at the expense of the intermediate/advanced players.
 - If Glyndon usage is restricted, it should be for only some months. In the winter time there are so few days when it is warm enough to play that we should be able to play any day.
 - Please retain the ability to reserve courts for 2 hours.
 - Would prefer the hours were shortened from 10am to 6pm and a day is added.

- Facilities
 - Build dedicated pickleball courts, suggestion at Southside Park and temporary police station.
 - Make Southside Park basketball court a shared use court with pickleball, before reducing time at Glyndon Park.
 - Increase pickleball options rather than decrease because of the huge demand.
 - Move pickleball to Nottoway Park where houses are further away and it's quieter.
 - Town needs to move pickleball away from Glyndon Park to reduce noise in the community and restore access to Tennis.
 - It's a public park.
 - Need better lines at Meadow Lane Park and times at the community center need to be increased as well.
 - Allow for use of lights so play can continue in the evening hours of the winter months until preferably 8pm.
- Mitigate noise
 - Request people to use GAMMA Foam Quiet Balls. Town can provide them at the site.
 - Install noise reducing barriers.
 - Plant more trees.
- Encourage more exercise, not less of it.
- Pickleball has numerous social and physical benefits. It is a fun sport for all ages and abilities.
- Neighbors bought/built a house next to a park, so they should understand the implications of that.
- I assume tax money was used to convert these courts for pickleball. And now you want to restrict the used hours because it bothers maybe 10-20 surrounding homeowners? Please stop this. Kids make noise at the playground, baseball players and their supporters make noise at the ball field. These are signs of a vibrant town where facilities are being used. This is much like the complaint that stopped outdoor dining because people who chose to live next to downtown didn't like downtown noise. You are restricting services to many when the complaints are coming from just a few.
- It seems courts are in high demand but it shouldn't come at the neighbor's expense. Let's work together to create a solution that works for the entire Town.
- Pickleball players pay the same taxes and should be allowed equal access.
- Pickleball parking needs to be addressed particularly where the road narrows and pickleball players park at an angle dangerous to traffic. A speed bump is very much needed at the bottom of the hill on that block.
- Pickleball is noisy for nearby residents.
- I can't tell you how many times I walk around Glyndon Park on a Sunday afternoon and no one is playing pickleball or tennis. Same with any other afternoon even when the weather is nice! I love when I see teens and children playing and I hate to see restrictions placed on them and their families. This is in no way a daily occurrence.

Pickleball Player Survey – Non-resident Responses

- 17 responses were received from non-resident pickleball players.
 - 14 non-residents preferred the scheduling option of Mon/Wed 8am to 8pm & Saturday 8am – 5pm.
 - 3 non-residents did not select a scheduling option as they commented the options are too restrictive and not fair
- Survey results are attached.
- Survey Comments/Concerns (summary)
 - There should be no scheduling restrictions for pickleball play.
 - It's a public park.
 - Look into noise mitigation efforts before placing restrictions on play.
 - Build more courts.

Survey Engagement to Pickleball Players

Staff specifically targeted the pickleball community through the following public engagement which was made available November 14 with a deadline of November 21.

- Physically posted the survey at Glyndon Park tennis/pickleball court with a QR code to access the survey.
- Emailed the survey to pickleball class participants registered through Parks & Recreation from the past year.
- Provided surveys to the drop-in pickleball players at the Community Center.
- Surveys are available in the Community Center lobby.
- Tom Warren, Vienna Pickleball Club contact, distributed the survey to pickleball players at Glyndon Park courts.
- Tom Warren posted an announcement of the survey on the Vienna Pickleball Club Facebook page.
- Staff posted the survey on the Town's website <https://www.viennava.gov/residents/parks-recreation/classes-and-programs/pickleball-and-tennis-in-vienna>

Why is pickleball sound an issue?

What makes the Pickleball sound annoying to the human ear isn't so much decibel levels as it is the high pitch. The decibels of Pickleball are about 20-25 decibels louder than tennis because of the materials that are used to make the paddles and the ball. Even a shot without much force behind it can sound loud. <https://www.greenwichpickleball.com/news-and-articles/pickleball-noise-solutions-quiet-paddles-balls-fencing>

Sound Mitigation

- Paddle Options
 - The USA Pickleball Association (USAPA) produces a paddle list, but it is only to determine if a paddle is approved for either recreation or for tournament play. The USAPA does not currently have a list of approved 'Quiet Paddles'.
 - Sun City Grand Green Zone list - In 2012, in an effort to reduce the recreational noise caused by the game of Pickleball, the Sun City Grand Board of Directors hired an acoustic engineering company to determine which paddles were creating sound that Sun City residents found unacceptable. Sun City Grand then created what is now known as 'the Green Zone Pickleball Paddle list', now widely adopted. This list places paddles into three categories - green, yellow or red. They only measure paddles that are approved for tournament play by the USA Pickleball Association. Attached please find the Sun City Grand Green Zone Pickleball paddle list, updated as of March, 9, 2022. <https://www.greenwichpickleball.com/news-and-articles/pickleball-noise-solutions-quiet-paddles-balls-fencing>
- Ball Selection
 - There are two different types of pickleballs - indoor and outdoor balls.
 - Indoor balls like shelter. Rain, snow and wind are not popular among these bouncers. They are also smaller, softer, lighter and have only 26 holes. On top of that they are quieter and easier to control, which often leads to longer rallies.
 - Outdoor balls are larger, harder, heavier and have 40 holes. They travel well in windy conditions. They are also louder and harder to control with a shorter lifespan. They crack easier, especially in cold weather.
 - There are options for quieter balls. Softer generally means quieter for outdoor pickleball balls, but 'soft' isn't the norm for high end outdoor balls. One example of an evolved ball is the Gamma Foam Quiet Pickleball. Instead of plastic, these balls are made of foam. They play differently than rule abiding balls and aren't approved for tournament play. Town staff requested the Vienna Pickleball Club to use foam balls and they refused.
- Court Placement Planning
 - Court orientation matters. More noise comes off the end of the pickleball court than the sides, due to the way sound travels. Glyndon Park pickleball courts are oriented so that the ends of the court face the neighbors at Ainstree Court whose homes are located closest to the courts.
 - The recommended distance between a pickleball court and a residential house is not identified by the USA Pickleball Association (USAPA).
- Sound Barriers & Fencing Mitigation
 - Acoustic fabric walls or fencing is an option.
 - AcoustiFence Pickleball Noise Curtains are promoted as a useful way to reduce noise. These curtains are heavy-duty, acoustically transparent material that absorbs sound, thereby reducing the noise that escapes the court. Town staff received a quote of \$33,000 to cover two sides of the court facing the neighbors on Ainstree Court and Jean Place.

- Another type of absorbing barrier is made of fiberglass channels with slots and internal fiberglass batting. These channels are expected to last over 50 years and they mount to vertical fiberglass poles. The final appearance is similar to a tall highway barrier. Examples of this type of barrier can be found at the website www.carsonite.com, Carsonite AcoustaShield™ sound barrier systems.
- Wind screens and bushes are not very effective sound barriers.
- Walls, hills and heavy layers of material are more effective.

<https://pickleballsound.com/sound-barrier-design/>

Public Pickleball Courts in Neighboring Jurisdictions

Town of Vienna – 6 outdoor courts, 5 indoor courts

- Residents – No fee to play indoors.
- Non-resident - \$3 per use for indoor courts.
- No fee – Residents and non-residents to play outdoors.

Arlington County – 20 outdoor courts, 11 indoor courts

- Residents and non-residents – No fee to play except at Thomas Jefferson Community Center. Thomas Jefferson Community Center courts are available to all who have a 55+ Gold Pass or Arlington County Fitness Membership or daily fee pass.
 - 55+ Gold Annual Pass – Resident \$60, Non-resident \$90
 - Arlington County Annual Fitness Membership – Resident \$195, Non-resident \$253.50
 - Daily Fee Pass – Resident \$5 (seniors \$4), Non-resident \$6.25

City of Alexandria – 18 courts

- Resident - \$10 per court per hour
- Non-resident - \$15 per court per hour
- Residents 55+ - no fee to play indoors and outdoors

City of Fairfax - 9 outdoor courts, 1 indoor court

- \$5 fee for all players at indoor court on Mondays and Saturdays
- No fee - Residents and non-residents to play outdoors.

City of Falls Church – 6 outdoor courts, 3 indoor courts

- No fee for play indoors or outdoors.

Fairfax County Park Authority – 52 outdoor courts, 6 indoor courts

- No fee – Residents and non-residents to play outdoors.

Fairfax Neighborhood and Community Services – 13 to 15 indoor courts, 1 outdoor court

- No fee to play indoors or outdoors.

Town of Herndon – indoor pickleball courts

- Residents (drop-in) - Adult \$7, Senior \$5.75
- Non-resident (drop-in) – Adult \$15, Senior \$6.50

Other Jurisdiction Pickleball Studies

- 1) **Fairfax County Park Authority** conducted a Pickleball Study that was endorsed by the Park Authority Board in December 2021. The report states that “pickleball is a social sport that can generate a moderate amount of noise and locations for play should consider the proximity to nearby residences. When sitting a court near a residential area, screening (e.g., engineered barrier, vegetation) should be considered. The survey results and input from other jurisdictions found that pickleball tends to generate more noise than other court sports due to its larger group sizes and paddle and ball materials.

The report also included pickleball scheduling and hours of operation. The hours of operation of shared-use or dedicated pickleball courts will be subject to the operating hours of the individual park or Rec Center. Both shared-use and dedicated pickleball courts are typically made available on a first-come-first-serve basis and should also be made available to reserve on an hourly basis per the terms and conditions of a park use permit with scheduling information and fees listed on the Park Authority’s Use Permit Webpage. Additionally, it is recommended that the Park Authority designate specific times/days for pickleball or tennis use only on a first-come-first-serve basis at shared-use courts to reduce conflicts between different user groups. These designated times could be posted on signage at selected courts and made available online for reference.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sites/parks/files/assets/documents/plandev/final%20pickleball%20study%20report-dec%202021.pdf>

- 2) **Montgomery Parks** (Montgomery County, Maryland Department of Parks) completed its own pickleball study in 2019. That study investigated service needs and gaps, player preferences on location and design, and service delivery strategies. Three levels of analysis were performed by staff, involving a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis methods (using a combination of spatial, non-spatial, and site analysis data), to analyze suitable park locations for Pickleball facilities. All parks that fulfilled the first level of analysis criteria moved to the second level of analysis. Similarly, the sites fulfilling the second level moved to the third level of analysis. All park sites that fulfilled the criteria for the third level of analysis made it to the preliminary list of parks for locating a Pickleball facility. It was cited in the report that the equipment and social aspect of the Pickleball Sport could be associated with noise issues in locations where the facility is close to homes and backyards, which is included in the third level of analysis. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1e5b9f424a714409b5ad3d2309de5829>

According to Charles Kines, Park Planner III with Montgomery Parks, “we generally avoid installing pickleball courts in communities with homes closer than 300 feet. Our Department may consider putting pickleball courts within 200-300 feet of homes, but only if the courts are not lighted (to avoid noise impacts at night). If courts are lighted, we seek a larger buffer from existing homes, 300 feet or more, depending on topography, presence of forest/wooded buffers, or if courts are adjacent to busy roads or highways.”

- 3) **Arlington County** (Department of Parks and Recreation) launched a project and community engagement process in November 2021 to review current and future uses of outdoor athletic courts. The project’s goal was to better understand the need for pickleball courts while reviewing existing outdoor athletic spaces to meet the increased demand for the sport. In July 2022, Arlington County approved \$2 million for more pickleball courts in their Capital Improvement Plan. Community engagement will begin in January 2022 to develop draft criteria

for converting single use courts to multi-use courts based on community feedback. Arlington has dealt with neighborhood complaints due to the noise of pickleball. Arlington temporarily closed a stand-alone pickleball court at Glebe Road Park during the spring and summer of 2022 and moved pickleball to the tennis courts hoping to mitigate the sound issues. The Columbia Heights Neighborhood have shared their concerns with the County asking them to do something about the crowds and noise from the pickleball courts at Walter Reed Community Center.

<https://thewash.org/2021/11/16/pickleballs-prevalence-arlington-county-volleys-solutions-to-match-increased-demand/>

<https://www.arlnow.com/2022/11/30/exclusive-more-residents-are-threatening-legal-action-because-of-pickleball-noise/>