

## M E M O R A N D U M

**To:** Howard Tipton, Town Manager  
**From:** Isaac Brownman, Public Works Director  
**Report date:** September 15, 2023  
**Meeting date:** September 26, 2023  
**Subject:** Bayfront Park: Pickleball and Parking

### **Recommended Action**

None, informational only.

### **Background**

The Town of Longboat Key's Bayfront Park renovation was completed in 2017 providing the community with enhanced park amenities including dog parks, kayaks and a kayak launch, basketball, pickleball, tennis, shuffleboard, a pavilion, fishing piers and seawalls, walking paths, open spaces and recreational green, a Recreation Center with fitness classes, a public beach access, playground, restrooms, and excellent views.

The renovation project resulted in a total of 60 parking spaces: 52 regular spots, 7 accessible parking spots, and 1 electric vehicle charging spot. Standard park hours are from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. and there are rental opportunities for certain amenities for events such as weddings and organized gatherings.

In recent years, pickleball has grown in popularity as a recreational activity. Bayfront Park currently has five (5) pickleball courts: three (3) dedicated courts and two (2) shared courts striped onto a tennis court. Concerns have been raised by multiple park users regarding parking availability, mostly between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. for peak season users, as a result of pickleball "open play," simultaneous fitness class participation, and other recreation users of the park. Pickleball users have also expressed a desire to expand pickleball court capacity at the park.

Parking demand, while high from January through March between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m., does fluctuate, and the scenario of "no available spaces" does not occur every morning.

The Town Commission discussed these matters at the February 21, 2023, and May 1, 2023, Commission meetings. The Town Commission directed the Town Manager to explore measures to mitigate parking capacity constraints and consider options to manage the pickleball demand. Below are the results of that effort and to improve the overall experience within the park:

- Public Works is expanding parking onsite, creating an additional 14 more shell parking spaces since the beginning of 2023, a 23% increase in parking options.
- Public Works continues negotiating with Frontier for the use of their adjacent property for overflow parking. Their site could potentially generate up to 14 spaces.
- Public Works is moving the tennis backboards from the shared pickleball/tennis court to the dedicated tennis court. This will ensure a tennis backboard user does

not tie-up use of the shared pickleball courts and enhance the pickleball experience.

- Public Works also purchased improved portable pickleball nets for the shared courts.
- Public Works will be resurfacing all the pickleball and tennis courts. That effort is planned to start in October.

With the expanded parking alone, Public Works believes it is worth observing how the additional parking capacity addresses the concerns of both the pickleball and fitness class communities for the upcoming 2024 season.

In addition, Public Works has held several discussions with one of the pickleball liaisons about the popularity of peak season “open play,” which is the driving factor to high demand during peak season mornings.

Currently pickleball “open play,” the most popular style of play, is accommodated on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays on the shared courts. Tennis “open play” is accommodated on Tuesdays and Thursdays. When not in use on Tuesdays and Thursdays, pickleball “open play” continues on those days. “Open play” is a mini-tournament style of play that allows for social recreating of larger groups. Options to manage peak season “open play” demand were discussed as noted below:

- Change Pickleball morning “open play” hours to designated times based on skill level.
  - Less preferred by the pickleball liaison than the current unrestricted “open play” and Town believes that would be difficult to monitor and enforce.
- Change Pickleball “open play” hours to afternoons only.
  - Much less preferred as many in the Town prefer social recreating in the mornings. Town acknowledges that and notes it would be difficult to enforce.
- Reservation system and part-time staffing.
  - Far less preferred as the pickleball liaison is concerned with how this would function with the “open play” style of social recreating. Town agrees that it would add a layer of complexity and also notes that this would add cost and potential additional staffing elements.

The pickleball community has posited a theory that the pickleball demand can be addressed by striping the remaining tennis court for shared use. The presumption is that the additional two courts would cycle players through faster and not appreciably increase the number of pickleball players using Bayfront Park during season.

Therefore, Public Works recommends the following: if the expanded parking appears to be working favorably during the early part of the 2024 peak season (January and early February), then Public Works can temporarily tape the remaining tennis court as a shared pickleball/tennis court as a “pilot” effort for the remainder of February, March, and April 2024. Public Works would then monitor and report back to the Town Manager.

Other enhancements Public Works is reviewing include adding lighting to the dedicated pickleball courts for evening and night play and adding a live feed camera so that pickleball users can self-manage demand.

## **Next Steps**

1. Continue pursuing lease agreement with Frontier for additional overflow parking.
2. Complete onsite parking expansion and move tennis backboards.
3. Maintain current “open play” dates and times for pickleball and tennis, respectively.
4. Observe and report to Town Manager on results of expanded parking during the early part of the 2024 peak season (through early February 2024).
5. If parking is working favorably (consistently enough spaces to cover all days and timeframes for fitness classes, pickleball, and other uses), then Public Works will temporarily tape the remaining tennis court as a “pilot” effort to see if that addresses the pickleball demand without exacerbating use numbers.

## **Staff Recommendation**

None, informational only.

## **Attachments**

PowerPoint Presentation (Available from Town Clerk’s Office)

**End of Agenda Item**