

MEMORANDUM

TO: Tom Harmer, Town Manager
FROM: Isaac Brownman, Public Works Director
REPORT DATE: October 8, 2019
MEETING DATE: October 15, 2019
SUBJECT: Bayfront Park Pickleball Expansion Update

Recommended Action

Provide Town Manager direction on a preferred PB expansion plan

Background

At the June 17, 2019, Town Commission Regular Workshop Meeting, staff received Commission direction to explore pickleball (PB) expansion at Bayfront Park while investigating tennis options on Town-owned properties island-wide. At the September 9, 2019 Regular Meeting, staff received direction to expand PB and maintain a tennis amenity at Bayfront Park. Staff was also tasked to confirm allowable uses on the Sarasota County owned portion of the park property.

Bayfront Park Pickleball Expansion Premise

Bayfront Park is a public park centrally located within Longboat Key. The park serves the residents and visitors of the Longboat Key community offering various amenities and was designed with significant public input.

We understand that it is not the Town's intent for Bayfront Park to become a PB 'magnet' nor to host regional tournaments, but it is the Town's desire to generally meet resident demand for PB facilities. Public comments have indicated that during peak season Bayfront Park PB use does include an off-island draw.

The high demand for PB has only been observed during season. Current amount of courts at Bayfront Park have been more than adequate to handle off-season demand. The greatest concerns received during season is regarding Open Play demand as it is a social event sport. PB currently has Tuesday and Thursday reserved for Open Play. Additional PB capacity can also be managed with more days.

Bayfront Park was recently re-designed and renovated based on significant public input and has received accolades with its current form and uses. Concepts should minimize cost and disruption to the park.

It is also important to note, any significant re-designing and redeveloping the park is currently underfunded or unfunded.

Current Court Overview

Bayfront Park currently has one dedicated PB court and two shared PB courts on the westerly tennis court. The park also has two tennis courts, one dedicated and one shared with PB as mentioned. Both courts are used for Open Play

during season. During season, Tennis has Open Play reserved on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9am – 11am while PB has Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8am – noon reserved for this form of play.

By the numbers, the Town currently has three (3) courts which can accommodate a total of 12 players on and 12 players waiting with a one game wait. Thus, a total of 24-players. This works well with the social aspect of the sport.

The staff has been informally monitoring the overall usage of the various amenities within the Park over at least the past year and a half. All amenities show active usage at various times of the day. Observations and reporting have indicated up to 40-players or more during certain days of peak season. By providing two (2) additional courts, this capacity can be accommodated as follows: 8 players with 8 waiting with a one-game wait. Thus, a total of 16-players, plus the existing 24-player capacity equals 40-players on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Capacity can be further expanded by swapping PB and Tennis Open Play days, such that PB Open Play occurs Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays while Tennis is provided Tuesdays and Thursdays. Therefore, it is recommended to add two additional courts plus swapping open play days.

It is important to note that Bayfront Park parking is at maximum capacity during highest peak season days because all amenities are in substantial use. These include PB, tennis, basketball and fitness classes occurring in the Recreation Center. Existing parking does not allow any additional user capacity, and there is no room to add parking. As stated earlier, it is our understanding that it is not the intent for Longboat Key to become a PB magnet or regional tournament host; therefore, Public Works recommends using the 40-player number for peak season PB planning.

In addition, it is important to note that staff have identified at least 27 private PB courts throughout Longboat Key. These courts have been added/converted over the past few years to address the increased interest in the sport.

There have been a number of ideas or concepts on how to add additional PB courts within Bayfront Park. Based on the projected need for additional courts, we analyzed a number of those concepts and those that are not recommended are included below:

**Pickleball Expansion Considerations Reviewed, but Not Recommended:
Kayak launch relocation to South property**

- Construction Costs will be significant and include:
 - Cutting out a portion of existing seawall
 - Building a new wingwalls for stabilization into the park
 - Building an extended boat ramp
 - Designing and constructing an access drive with large boat-trailer turn-around area

- Fulfilling mitigation requirements for sea grass impacts at new boat ramp
- Designing and constructing a new access driveway next to Longboat Estates neighborhood and playground swing set creates a safety concern. Large circular turn-around and parking required.
- No drainage accommodation for new impervious surfaces plus impacts to existing, permitted Stormwater area.
- Sarasota County owned property; complications with concessionaire

Dog Park relocation to South property

- Construction Costs include:
 - Remove fencing from existing Dog Park area
 - Add fencing and run water to South property
 - Construct new PB courts on Dog Park areas
- South property is a non-shaded area
- Dog Parks would be placed adjacent to children's play area which creates a safety concern.
- No drainage accommodation for new PB impervious surfaces on dog park green.

Would require significant drainage re-work to avoid flooding intersection inlet.

Hard Courts (PB or Tennis) on South property:

- Not allowed per Sarasota County's Neighborhood Parkland Funding
- Passive Uses only

Green space just north of the Frontier facility:

- Based on initial measurements, green space too small for minimum dimension at correct orientation. Potential impact to driveway.

Bayfront Park Pickleball Expansion Scenarios:

Scenario #1: Green Space

The Bayfront Park green space can be used to build two new dedicated pickleball courts. If desired up to four courts may fit ultimately on the site. Order of magnitude cost for two courts is roughly \$50,000, including a contingency.

- 3 dedicated PB Courts
- 2 shared PB Courts with Tennis
- 1 dedicated Tennis Court
- Maintains existing Basketball layout

Impact to existing amenities: Creates a separation from the new to the existing courts, reduces available open field green space, and affects view from driveway, promenade and Recreation Center. According to the site engineer of record, drainage can be accommodated to the South.

Scenario #2: Convert 1 Tennis to 2 Dedicated Pickleball and add 2 Shared Courts

The western tennis court can be converted permanently to two dedicated pickleball courts. Two additional shared courts can be striped on the East tennis courts. Public Works can modify the Open Play times to accommodate PB on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and then monitor usage over the next season. This option has no drainage impacts and lower cost at about \$12,000 for the conversion, plus paint and nets for the shared court.

- 3 dedicated PB Courts
- 2 shared PB Courts with Tennis
- No dedicated Tennis Court
- Maintains existing Basketball layout

Impact to existing amenities: reduce available tennis courts from two to one shared.

Scenario #3: Convert Majority of Basketball to Dedicated Pickleball

The majority of the basketball court can be converted permanently to two dedicated PB courts. Public Works can modify the open play times to accommodate pickleball on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and then monitor usage over the next season. This option has no drainage impacts and lower cost at about \$12,000 for the conversion.

- 3 dedicated PB Courts
- 2 shared PB Courts with Tennis
- 1 dedicated Tennis Court
- Reduces Basketball pay area to one net with less than ½ of Court

Impact to existing amenities: due the diversity of park amenities, it is important from a staff perspective to note basketball is one of the few amenities on site where more youth are observed (that and the playground). A variety of youth and their apparent families use the multiple nets available on the court. Reducing the court from a large court with four usable nets down to one net at less than ½ court significantly impacts this use. It is also a unique public amenity within the Town.

The Town's available budget for all four scenarios is approximately \$92,485. This is from the original \$100,000 set aside by the Commission, less the cost of the tennis center due diligence effort for \$7,515. In addition, previous Town Commission discussions focused on the pickleball community providing a financial contribution to the project as well. Even if the Commission selects an option that does not require private funding to accomplish, additional funding could be used to support the changes including, additional pavilion and/or seating improvements, paddleball hangers, nets for shared usage, etc.

Recommended Action

Provide Town Manager direction on a preferred PB expansion plan. Due to cost and the impact to the Park, staff does not recommend using the existing green space for the expansion (Scenario 1). Scenario 2 or 3 provides lower cost options, adds permanent PB amenities and maintains some level of tennis and basketball play within the hard court area. Regardless of the option selected, staff will continue to monitor usage of overall Park amenities.

Attachments

PowerPoint Presentation (Available in Town Clerk's Office)

End of Agenda Item