

Sports Commission Meeting Agenda

Thursday, January 26th, 2023

In Person

Lubber Run Community Center

Time: 7:00pm to 9:00pm

Public Comment

Approval of Minutes

- Approval of December 15th, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Other

- Marymount Presentation

New Business

- Welcome new Sports Commission Members
- Sports Commission Liaison Roles
 - Liaisons to Sports Groups
 - Liaison to Parks & Rec Commission
- Sports Commission 2022 Annual Report Review
- Sports Commission 2023 Annual Workplan Review
- Pickleball/Tennis Letter (Draft)

Commission Member Reports

- Chair Updates
- Communications Working Group
- Promise Working Group

Upcoming Sports Commission Meetings

- February 23rd, 2023
- March 23rd, 2023
- April 28th, 2023
- May 26th, 2023
- July 28th, 2023
- September 29th, 2023
- October 27th, 2023
- November 17th, 2023
- December 15th, 2023

Sports Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 15th, 2022

Virtual Meeting

Time: 7:00pm to 9:00pm

Commission Members Present:

John Mingus, Chair
Justin Wilt, Vice Chair
George Thompson
Kristi Sawert

Jason Despain
David Lansing

Commission Members Absent:

Greg Gimenez
Nancy Sharkey

County/APS Staff:

Greg Anselene, DPR
Tyler Remerow, DPR

Guests

Mark Lincoln

Start

(7:13pm)

Public Comment

- None

Approval of Minutes

- October 27th, 2022 Meeting Minutes approved
 - Motioned to approve October 27th 2022 meeting minutes, seconded and approved.

New Business

- Combatting Hate in Sports Working Group Discussion
 - Brief history of CHSW up to December 2022 meeting. Proposal to change the name of the CHSW working group. Motion, seconded and approved to change working group name to 'PROMISE'. Next step is to meet with partner leagues in February to share framework, pledges and ask that they appoint a point of contact for the PROMISE working group. Chair, John Mingus, to chair the PROMISE working group. How is the success and value of

PROMISE to be measured? Motion to proceed with implementation and changing structure of PROMISE, seconded and approved.

- Sports Commission 2022 Annual Report Discussion and 2023 Annual Workplan Discussion
 - 2023 Workplan to be reviewed during January meeting. Topics may include Marymount project, Kenmore project, review of Jennie Dean project, athletic field lighting.
- Lizzy Stell and Khal Manaro approved as new Sports Commission members.

Commission Member Reports

- **Chair Updates**
- **PSMP-IAC**
 - No Updates
- **Communications Working Group**
 - No Updates
- **Combatting Hate in Sports Working Group**
 - CHSWG name change approved to PROMISE

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Adjourn

(7:50pm)

Christian Dorsey, County Board Liaison

Attest:

Tyler Remerow

Tyler Remerow, Staff Liaison

Arlington County Sports Commission

The Honorable Matt de Ferranti
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. de Ferranti,

The Arlington County Sports Commission recently heard presentations from the Arlington Pickleball Club and the Arlington County Tennis Association to get a sense of the challenges facing Pickleball and Tennis in the County. Pickleball, in particular, is experiencing growing pains as its popularity grows and increasing numbers of players look for playing spaces and times. This growth also affects tennis, as pickleball often is played on modified tennis courts, resulting in a competition for space. This letter describes the growth of interest in both pickleball and tennis, sources of friction between the sports, and concludes with recommendations to accommodate both tennis and pickleball in the County.

Pickleball

Pickleball is a racquet sport played by groups of four on badminton-sized courts; four pickleball courts fit on a single tennis court. Portable nets are used to create pickleball courts, which may be played indoors or out. While Pickleball has been played in Arlington for 30 years, it experienced dramatic growth in the last 5 years, particularly during the pandemic, and the Arlington Friends of Pickleball Facebook group currently has 1660 members. Arlington Pickleball club representatives indicated that there are often waiting lines for courts during morning and evening hours, including indoor times in County facilities. The sport has a “drop-in” culture, where players simply show up at courts and play 15 minute games, and can play many games in a row.

There are currently pickleball courts at Fort Scott Park, Glebe Road Park, Gunston Park, Lubber Run Park, and Walter Reed Park. These courts vary in configuration and use rules (drop-in, reserved, or both):

Park	Pickleball Court Configuration and Use Rules
Fort Scott	1 Tennis court also lined for pickleball for drop-in play.
Glebe Road Park	Two courts striped on tennis court #1. Two additional courts coming soon to tennis court #2. For drop-in play unless the court has been reserved.
Gunston Park	Two courts with different color lines for drop-in play.
Lubber Run Park	Four courts striped on the pickleball/basketball courts for drop-in play.
Walter Reed Park	Six courts on the tennis courts and three courts on the basketball court for drop-in play. Two courts may be reserved.

There are also three free indoor drop-in pickleball options in the County at the Arlington Mill, Carver, Lubber Run Community Centers. A fourth indoor drop-in location, Thomas Jefferson Community Center, requires adults to have a membership or pay a daily visit fee to use drop-in opportunities in the gym.

Tennis

Tennis also is a racquet sport played in groups of two or four on tennis courts. The number of tennis players in the US grew by about 22% since 2019, growth also experienced in the Mid-Atlantic region, which increased by about 27%. The Mid-Atlantic currently ranks #1 in the percentage of tennis players per population (8.6%). In Arlington, there are roughly 500 participants each season for the winter, spring, summer, and fall doubles leagues and there are 82 players in the 2022 singles ladder. The ACTA email list includes 2527 members. There are also 511 Arlington residents participating in the USTA League Program, but the USTA has to limit the number of sessions offered due to court demand.

While the tennis-playing population is growing, the number of tennis courts available in Arlington has shrunk, from about 103 courts in the 1990s to about 87 courts today, including courts being shared with pickleball. Arlington County Tennis Association representatives indicated that demand for court-time is high, particularly at popular locations such as Towers Park and Virginia Highlands Park. Tennis courts can be found at 26 parks and community centers in the County, ranging from 1 court at Langston Brown to 9 courts at Bluemont. Courts may be reserved online for use.

Sources of Friction

The two sources of friction between pickleball and tennis are primarily 1) their competition for space and 2) their cultures. Because pickleball often is played on modified tennis courts, their players are competing for court time. Players of both sports express dissatisfaction about sharing space, both because of the increased demand for limited courts, and because two sets of lines (one set for tennis and another for pickleball) are described as distracting for players. Pickleball players are also accustomed to a drop-in culture and playing multiple games, while tennis players in Arlington have grown accustomed to reserving courts for a specified amount of time.

Additionally, some County residents have raised concerns about the noise created by pickleball. It is played with paddles and hard plastic balls and is much louder than tennis. Noise complaints led to a stand-alone pickleball court at Glebe Road Park being turned back into a tennis court and restriping the tennis court farther from nearby houses so that it could be used for tennis and for pickleball.

Recommendations

While Pickleball and the ACTA would like to have stand alone courts for both sports,¹ the Sports Commission feels that the County has established the practice of shared space and multi-use fields and courts around the county. Football, flag football, lacrosse, soccer, and field hockey share fields, each with multiple sets of markings painted on high school fields for each sport. Baseball fields are used by multiple age groups and also share outfields with flag football, soccer, and ultimate. Additionally, residents use fields and courts with drop-in time for all

¹ ACTA notes that there are pickleball-only facilities or plans for such facilities in Fairfax County, Fairfax City, Culpeper County, Prince William County and Richmond.

manner of activities. Local jurisdictions are following the shared space approach, as Alexandria was scheduled to add pickleball lines to 48% of their tennis courts in 2022, and Falls Church has added pickleball lines on all their tennis courts and is providing portable nets on wheels.

While shared use is a preferred practice, the Public Space Master Plan incorporated the concept of sports complexes that provide the highest level of facilities for that sport. The Capital Improvement Plan passed in 2022 includes funding to create this type of facility for pickleball. The Commission encourages staff to proceed as fast as is practical to get this facility sited, designed and built.

The Commission also suggests creating a registration system for pickleball courts, similar to that currently used for the tennis courts. While this might present a cultural shift for the pickleball players, it would enable players to better predict where they will be able to get court time and avoid the long lines described by the Arlington Pickleball Club.

To accommodate concerns of residents near pickleball courts, the Commission recommends situating the courts away from residences when possible. Reducing the hours when courts may be used might be another option to lessen the impact on residential communities. This approach also was taken at Glebe Road Park.

The Commission notes that additional court users may be impacted by pickleball court location. Pickleball may be played on basketball courts (for example, at Walter Reed Park) so it is important to consider the needs of basketball players, particularly drop-in players who are not as organized as the racquet sports are, as decisions are made about locating pickleball courts on basketball courts.

Finally, the Commission asks the Board to consider enforcement mechanisms to ensure that court users follow the rules regarding when and where each sport may be played. An article in Arlington Now noted reported that “Back in November [2021], county officials expressed some frustration that pickleball players were going rogue and unilaterally marking off pickleball boundaries on existing tennis and basketball courts.” It is important that all stakeholders know and follow the rules regarding court access and usage. We are a small community and we all must share limited resources.