

Sports Commission Meeting Agenda

Thursday, March 23rd, 2023

Virtual Meeting

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+1 347-973-6905

Phone Conference ID: 297 255 665#

Time: 7:00pm to 9:00pm

Public Comment

Approval of Minutes

- Approval of January 26th, 2023 Meeting Minutes

New Business

- Pickleball Letter Review
- Annual Plan Review
- Budget Notes
- Ball Recycling Update

Commission Member Reports

- Chair Updates
- PSMP-IAC
- Communications Working Group
- PROMISE Working Group

Upcoming Sports Commission Meetings

- April 27th, 2023
- May 25th, 2023
- June 27th, 2023
- August 24th, 2023
- September 28th, 2023
- October 26th, 2023
- November 16th, 2023
- December 21st, 2023

Sports Commission Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 26th, 2023
In-person Meeting at Lubber Run Community Center
Time: 7:00pm to 9:00pm

Commission Members Present:

John Mingus, Chair
Jason Despain
Khal Manaro
Lizzy Stell
Kristi Sawert
David Lansing
George Thompson
Nancy Sharkey

Commission Members Absent:

Greg Gimenez

County/APS Staff:

Tyler Remerow, DPR
Deb DeFranco, APS

Guests:

Mark Lincoln
Jill McCabe, Director of Athletics & Recreation/ Assistant Vice President, Marymount University
Gaston Araoz, Government and Community Relations Manager, Marymount University
Jimmy McCumber, Associate Athletic Director for Development, Marymount University

Start:

7:05pm

Public Comment:

- None

Approval of Minutes:

- December 15th, 2022, Meeting Minutes Approved
 - Motion – Jason Despain
 - Second – David Lansing

Other:

- Marymount University Presentation
 - Draft Proposal of Recreational Projects in Arlington County. Three proposals include 1. Sports field on 26th Street & Old Dominion. 2. W&L High School Softball Field. 3. Quincy Park Baseball Field.

New Business:

- Staff introductions and welcome new members (Khal Manaro and Lizzy Stell).
- Sport Commission Liaison to Parks and Recreation Commission vacant. Those interested should reach out to Chair, John Mingus.
- Description of liaisons to sports groups. To be assigned in future.
- Commission to review rough draft of Sports Commission annual report to board. Send edits to Chair, John Mingus
- Member, Kristi Sawert asks commission to keep an eye on DPR Summer Camp registration's level of equity (Access and number of offerings).
- Commission to review rough draft of Tennis/Pickleball letter. Send edits to Nancey Sharkey.
-

Commission Member Reports:

- **Chair Updates**
 - February meeting to be joint meeting with Parks and Recreation Committee. Topics to include annual budget.
- **PSMP-IAC**
 - No update.
- **Communications Working Group**
 - Continue to highlight good news sports stories. Suggestions or ideas please reach out to Jason Despain.
- **PROMISE Working Group**
 - Working group summary and update to name from Combating Hate Working Group to PROMISE Working Group. Emails to go out to sports groups to introduce framework of group and the PROMISE Working Group pledges that exist. David Lansing to be added to PROMISE Working Group.

Upcoming Meetings:

- February 23rd, 2023 (Joint Meeting with Parks & Recreation Commission)
- March 23rd, 2023
- April 27th, 2023
- May 25th, 2023
- June 27th, 2023
- August 24th, 2023
- September 28th, 2023
- October 26th, 2023
- November 16th, 2023
- December 21st, 2023

Adjourn:

8:39pm



ARLINGTON COUNTY SPORTS COMMISSION
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 414
Arlington, Virginia 22201



March 30, 2023

The Honorable Christian Dorsey
Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd
Arlington, VA 22201

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 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 and the impact it has on the immediate community. 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. Similar concerns have emerged from the Columbia Heights Civic Association (CHCA), which opposes concentrating pickleball courts at Walter Reed, citing both incessant noise and its impact on parking throughout the week. Residents point out that the courts are in use at Walter Reed from 7am until 10pm, and that the noise has affected some other park amenities (for example, a children's sensory garden). Walter Reed is also a senior center, and the CHCA reports that pickleball players are competing with seniors for limited parking spaces nearest the Center during the week. Residents have noted that parking on the streets adjacent to the courts is also insufficient to accommodate the new use of the park.

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 manner of activities. Local jurisdictions are following the shared space approach, as Alexandria

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.

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 encourages DPR to take steps to mitigate the noises associated with pickleball. Reducing the hours when courts may be used might be another option to lessen the impact on residential communities. Given that this approach was taken at Glebe Road Park, from an equity perspective it should be implemented across the county. The Commission recommends that sufficient park rangers be hired to ensure within hours use of the courts, in addition to other parks and recreation amenities, like ball fields and basketball courts. The Commission encourages DPR to explore steps other jurisdictions are taking to address the issues raised by pickleball.

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.

Sincerely,



John Mingus, Chair
Sports Commission



ARLINGTON COUNTY SPORTS COMMISSION
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 414
Arlington, Virginia 22201



March 30, 2023

The Honorable Christian Dorsey
Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Dorsey,
I am pleased to provide the 2022 annual report on the activities of the Sports Commission.
If you or the other Board members have any feedback or questions about this report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Mingus".

John Mingus, Chair
Sports Commission

Summary

2022 was a year of change for the Sports Commission. As noted below, we had several resignations and other significant turnover in our membership. Despite these changes, however, the Commission still had a productive year.

The Commission met 12 times. Our activities have been guided for several years by four priorities: (1) examining the capacity and use of recreational facilities; (2) understanding and supporting underserved groups and communities; (3) increasing our engagement with advisory Commissions and key stakeholders; and (4) participating in County projects and processes as warranted. We made progress in each area and adapted our agendas to discuss pressing issues.

Structure, Operations, and Membership

The Commission, which is authorized to have 15 members was not fully staffed throughout most of 2022. Commission members included: John Bacon (term expired April 2022), Jason Despain, Greg Gimenez, Sherry Kohan (term expired November 2022), David Lansing (Appointed June 2022), John Mingus, Khaleen Monaro (Appointed December 2022), Andrew Murray (term expired November 2022), Jessica Paska (term expired May 2022), Kristi Sawert, Nancy Sharkey, Megan Sheckles (resigned January 2022), Elizabeth Stell (Appointed December 2022), George Thompson, David Tornquist (term expired April 2022), Frank Tranfa (term expired November 2022), Texas Williams (resigned May 2022), Justin Wilt (term expired December 2022). John Mingus served as Chair for 2022. Justin Wilt was the Vice Chair.

In 2019, the Commission identified over 40 sports, constituent groups, and advisory bodies that the Commission does or should represent. Our plan for commencing the learning process from this approach was disrupted by the pandemic, and we are working to resume outreach to inform our 2022 agenda.

The Commission was an official member of 2 County workgroups: the Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (PSMP-IAC);¹ and the Greenbrier Park Operations Committee.² The activities of the first two are addressed in this report.

Issues Addressed in 2022

The Commission's 2022 deliberations and discussions addressed many of its four priority areas as well as several new issues, covered below under "Other Topics."

Examining the Capacity and Use of Recreational Facilities

- Budget –We were pleased with the FY22 budget which increased staffing at the Luber Run Community Center, hired field maintenance staff and included salary increases for staff. In addition, it incorporated the findings of the Field Fund Working Group to modestly increase field user fees.
- Fiscal Years 2023 - 2032 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)—We eagerly supported the CIP. We were glad to see the Emerging Uses Funding for pickleball, planning dollars for the Boathouse and continuing to fund the Synthetic Turf Program. Lastly, we are excited by the

¹ This group provides input and feedback to the county on the implementation of the PSMP. Focus areas include the Integrated Forestry & Natural Resources Master Plan; field utilization/lighting/turf; Zoning Regulation review; and casual use spaces.

² The Committee facilitates dialogue among Greenbrier Park users and the surrounding neighborhood.

coming transformation of the fields at Kenmore and were glad that the final CIP moved this project up to it can begin sooner.

- PSMP IAC – In 2022 the Commission continued to be a member of the PSMP IAC.

Underserved Groups and Communities

In June of 2022, the Commission received the initial report of the Combating Hate in Sports Working Group (CHWG). This report listed the efforts the CHWG had undertaken and proposed next steps. The Commission has started the process of implementing the proposals by starting to reaching out to DPR's partners program leagues to share the findings of the group and to begin the process of implementing the working group's framework.

Improving Commission Networks

The Commission improved its networks in 2022 through:

- continued investment in its relationship with the PRC;
- participation in official groups like the PSMP IAC and other informal groups that allow us to meet and interact with representatives from other advisory bodies and parts of the community.

In 2022, the Commission's Communications Working Group developed a framework aimed at helping sports league share their stories with the overarching goal of improving the community's understanding and appreciation of the role of sports in Arlington and the needs of the community members who play them.

Continued expansion of its networks in 2023 will help the Commission build and leverage partnerships to improve its advisory and advocacy activities.

Participate in County Projects and Processes

The Commission's participation in County projects and processes was limited to the PSMP IAC

Other Topics

- Pickleball and Tennis – We received briefings from both pickleball and tennis groups to increase the Commission's understanding of the issues arising from the growth of pickleball.

2023 Annual Plan

Topics the Commission plans to address in 2023 include:

- PSMP implementation
- Increased interaction with all sports groups in Arlington and improved representation of their interests in Commission business.
- Implementation of the recommendation of our Combatting Hate in Sports Working Group
- Progress on various sports and recreation facility projects.
- Increasing our understanding of the issues around building a boathouse in Arlington
- Working to understand the background Marymount University's field proposals and facilitating discussions about them
- Continuing to work on the issues around the growth of pickleball
- Now that Jennie Dean has been open for some time, work with DPR to see what usage looks like and how the new field has worked
- Get involved in the Kenmore planning process
- Work with other commissions to push for the zoning changes envisioned in the PSMP
- Work with sports groups in Arlington to understand their issue and to be their voice
- Other issues that may arise that are consistent with the Commission's role and charter