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**REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION**

**7:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 13, 2016**

**Willow Pass Community Center**

**(Please Note Change of Meeting Place)**

**2748 East Olivera Road, Concord**



**AGENDA**

**ROLL CALL**

**PLEDGE TO THE FLAG**

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

(The public may speak on any item within the jurisdiction of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commission not listed on this agenda. Approximately 15 minutes is allocated for the Public Comment Period. Each speaker is requested to complete speaker cards with their name and address for the record prior to the meeting – speaker will be allowed approximately 3 minutes.)

Correspondence received that constitutes a public record under the Public Records Act concerning any matter on this agenda is available for inspection during normal business hours by contacting the Parks & Recreation Administration Office at 1950 Parkside Drive, Concord, CA.

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- 1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF January 20, 2016**
  - 2. CONSIDERATION – UPDATE ON APPROVED TENNIS COURT RESURFACING PROJECT AT WILLOW PASS PARK and CONCORD COMMUNITY PARK & PROPOSED CONVERSION OF 4 TENNIS COURTS TO 14 PICKLEBALL COURTS AT WILLOW PASS PARK - Report by Steve Voorhies, Parks & Recreation Director**
  - 3. CORRESPONDENCE/ANNOUNCEMENTS**
  - 4. ADJOURNMENT**

**NEXT REGULAR MEETING: May 11, 2016**

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In accordance with the Americans With Disabilities Act and California Law, it is the policy of the City of Concord to offer its public programs, services and meetings in a manner that is readily accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities. If you are disabled and require a copy of a public hearing notice, or an agenda and/or agenda packet in an appropriate alternative format; or if you require other accommodation, please contact the ADA Coordinator at (925) 671-3063, at least five days in advance of the meeting. Advance notification within this guideline will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility.

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**REPORT TO PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE COMMISSION**

DATE: April 13, 2016

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON APPROVED TENNIS COURT RESURFACING PROJECT AT WILLOW PASS PARK and CONCORD COMMUNITY PARK & PROPOSED CONVERSION OF 4 TENNIS COURTS TO 14 PICKLEBALL COURTS AT WILLOW PASS PARK**

**Report in Brief**

In response to inquiries and interest expressed by members of the public, Parks & Recreation staff have been exploring the possibility of providing an organized Pickleball program in the City of Concord. After diligently assessing and documenting community interest in the sport, staff has identified an opportunity to offer a high quality, organized Pickleball program in Concord that will enhance the active, healthy lifestyles of the community.

Having a proper facility to conduct the activities is the single most critical component to developing a successful, long-term Pickleball program. In January 2016, the City Council approved a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) allocating funding for the repair and resurfacing of the three out of seven tennis courts at Concord Community Park and all eight tennis courts at Willow Pass Park. Included in the request for bids was an alternative option for converting tennis courts to pickleball courts. Exercising this bid option presents an opportunity to grow a low-cost, revenue generating, inter-generational pickleball sports program that provides valuable health and wellness benefits to a broad segment of the community.

Information contained in this report provides a background on the sport of pickleball and several options to consider expanding access to the sport in Concord. As a cost-effective way to respond to a community demand for this new and rapidly growing sport, staff recommends that the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Commission concur with staff's recommendation to repurpose four (4) tennis courts at Willow Pass Park into fourteen (14) dedicated pickleball courts; and authorize staff to present this finding to City Council for their approval and seek \$39,000 of additional funds for inclusion in the tennis courts resurfacing project.

**Background**

The City of Concord park system includes the following inventory of tennis and pickleball court facilities:

- Concord Community Park                      7 tennis courts (3 out of service since 2008)  
(Photo on page 8 of this report)
- Willow Pass Park                                8 lighted tennis courts  
(Photo on page 7 of this report)              4 pickleball courts, dual use portable nets
- Pine Hollow "Pocket" Park                  2 lighted tennis courts

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In November 2013, Parks and Recreation staff received an email with the subject line – “Suggestion for a class”. The email was brief, explaining a little about the game of Pickleball and giving suggestions for where additional information could be found. Over the next year, staff researched the sport and found that it was rapidly growing across the country. They then met with local pickleball enthusiasts, started an email interest list and offered three free two-hour demonstrations that were attended by 18 people.

In late 2014, Parks and Recreation staff acquired a contract Pickleball Instructor, purchased four portable pickleball nets and had pickleball lines painted on four existing tennis courts in Willow Pass Park creating shared use courts. In February 2015, three additional free clinics were offered, followed in March, 2015 with the first set of six-week introductory fee-based pickleball classes. The 90 minute classes were offered strategically in the morning, evening and on a Saturday so they could be available to everyone in the community. All three classes, limited to 12 people each, filled quickly and generated a waiting list of 27 people, 11 of which wanted the evening (6:30p-8:00p) class. In June 2015, programming was expanded to offer introductory and intermediate classes, which filled immediately and produced significant waitlists.

This group of newly developed pickleball players, along with other local pickleball advocates, led to the demand for an established space and time for people to just play the game. As a result, in December of 2015, the Parks and Recreation staff introduced select pickleball drop-in hours at Willow Pass Park. Times were restricted to when part-time community center staff would be available to set-up and take down the portable nets. The lighted courts at this facility allowed us to offer evening pickleball drop in times which had been proven to be a desirable time to play. As the drop in program grew, players wanted a way to communicate and meet up with other pickleball players. To address this need and help generate conversation while protecting privacy, Parks and Recreation staff started the “Concord, CA Pickleball Enthusiast” on the popular social networking site “Meetup”. On this site people can RSVP to pickleball drop-in announcements and communicate directly with each other to arrange single and double play. The Meetup group, established in December, 2015, already has 100 members and to date nearly 200 people have joined our interest mailing list.

The Concord City Council recently approved a CIP to resurface many of the City’s tennis courts that were in most need of repair; work will be scheduled over the next several months beginning at Concord Community Park where three of the seven tennis courts have been completely unavailable for public use since 2008. Due to the strong community interest and growing demand for pickleball, staff included a request for the price to convert tennis courts to pickleball courts during the tennis court resurfacing bid process. Like other cities, staff is finding that utilizing shared courts with portable nets significantly restricts the ability to meet the growing demand for increased pickleball play. Additional programming is not possible given the temporary facilities currently utilized which is why staff has researched tennis court conversion and is recommending that it be considered.

Additional information and perspective on the sport of pickleball and how another community in Southern California embraced the sport are available through the following video links:

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y2a1BK4wBCM>

<http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/pickleball/>

### **Discussion**

Pickleball is a court sport that can be played in singles or doubles on a badminton-sized court with a tennis style net, ping-pong style paddle and whiffle-style ball creating a unique and accessible game. The rules are established to be low impact and easy to learn. Serving is cross-court, underhand and below waist level making it gentle on both knees and shoulders. The smaller court decreases the amount of running required and increases the level of social interaction as players are close to the action.

The sport of pickleball is growing in popularity across the nation and the world. In the San Francisco Bay Area, Parks and Recreation departments have been utilizing current tennis, basketball and volleyball courts to creatively provide access to the sport for community members that are asking for space to play. Pickleball has begun to outgrow these creative solutions leading to the development of longer and more inclusive drop-in hours at existing facilities and prompting the development of dedicated pickleball courts.

The low-price and social nature of the game have made the sport extremely popular and appealing to the senior population, many of whom will travel up to 60 miles a day to find places to play. However across the nation, a growing number of younger players are also joining the sport and playing with and against the seniors, making it a truly inter-generational sport. As evidenced by program enrollment and drop-in attendance, Concord pickleball attracts the senior population along with many working adults. Inquiries from the public also indicate that there are local parents looking for youth pickleball programs for their children.

According to an article in the September 23, 2015 Lamorinda Weekly, "Pickleball's popularity also lies in its accessibility. Aging tennis players will find that the sport offers a comparable experience to tennis, but that the shrunken court demands less impact while still offering good exercise. Young athletes will appreciate the economy of Pickleball gear in comparison to other sports equipment."

Another attractive attribute of pickleball is that while skill and strategy do become factors for players that want to compete, the simple nature of the sport and play close to the net make it an ideal sport for people with physical and mental disabilities. The USA Pickleball Association (USAPA) has developed rules to accommodate wheelchair bound players, making it an all access sport.

In the Concord region, many cities have created shared pickleball courts and are offering limited drop-in pickleball times. There are limited, shared use courts available on select days and times at Tice Valley Gym in Walnut Creek and NorCal Courts and Hidden Valley Park in Martinez. A growing number of cities have already converted shared use courts into dedicated

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Pickleball courts to meet increased demand. Discovery Bay and Santa Rosa recently, during court resurfacing projects, converted tennis courts to dedicated pickleball courts. Locally, Walnut Creek, also during their planned resurfacing project, converted one tennis court (out of five) to four dedicated pickleball courts at Rudgear Park. These courts opened in late 2015 and have been reported to be in such high demand that people are regularly unable to get court time. The City of Martinez has also committed to the development of dedicated pickleball court facilities.

Similar to the functions of the United States Tennis Association (USTA), the USA Pickleball Association (USAPA), is a non-profit 501(c) (3) corporation established to promote the growth and development of pickleball on both national and international levels. This organization provides players with official rules, tournament rankings and promotional information. Membership in USAPA is inexpensive and includes discounts and secondary insurance for players. In addition, the USAPA maintains a list of places to play pickleball across the United States, in California there are 251 places listed, and, of those, less than 10% offer evening drop in hours. As interest in the sport rapidly expands, cities such as Albany, El Cerrito and Discovery Bay are adding evening drop-in times to accommodate working players. Program data collected by Parks & Recreation staff further supports the need for lighted, dedicated pickleball courts that allow for both day-time and evening play.

According to an article by Darren Heitner in the August 17, 2015 edition of Forbes Magazine, "The sport of tennis in North America is measured by annual racket and ball sales. Measurable play activity is definitely struggling overall, with adult play in decline among an aging demographic." This nationwide decline in tennis combined with the growing interest in pickleball by younger generations and the quick expansion of the sport among the aging population makes Pickleball uniquely suited for a city which was recently selected by Conde Nast Traveler as one of the 10 best places in the world to retire.

The tennis court resurfacing CIP will nearly double the number of useable tennis courts at Concord Community Park (increasing it from four to seven) relieving strain on that facility during its busy morning and afternoon hours. According to recently observed court use at Willow Pass Park, less than one quarter of the eight tennis courts are used with any regularity during the day. In addition, there are evenings when only three to four of the eight courts are in use at any one time. On drop-in pickleball nights, at least one of the courts in use is occupied by pickleball players. By exercising the bid alternative option in the tennis court resurfacing project and converting four of the eight courts to dedicated pickleball courts, Concord would still have four tennis courts available at Willow Pass Park. The project as a whole would result in the net loss of only one tennis court when compared to what has been available to the public in recent years.

By converting tennis courts at Willow Pass Park, the city will be taking facilities that are considered under-utilized nearly 80% of the time during the day and 50% of the time in the evening and create a pickleball venue that local and national trends along with our community members tell us will become an asset that will be used substantially more. Parks and Recreation staff will continue to work in collaboration with community members to ensure all courts at Willow Pass Park remain available to meet the needs of the many user groups, including general

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public access, recreational enrichment classes, revenue generating tournaments, clinics and for scheduled use by community groups.

Converting four tennis courts into fourteen dedicated pickleball courts at Willow Pass Park as part of the tennis court resurfacing project is a cost effective way to take under-utilized space and transform it into a sport venue that provides health and wellness benefits to the community. With the proposed fourteen dedicated courts, Concord would be the largest pickleball venue in Northern California and could be the premier facility for pickleball leagues and local, regional and national USAPA sanctioned tournaments, bringing people to Concord from all across the region.

**Fiscal Impact**

It is cost prohibitive to build a brand new pickleball facility. The cost to convert courts at another time, not in conjunction with the current resurfacing CIP would be substantially more expensive. Community demand, fiscal prudence and best practices learned from other cities indicates that the most appropriate time to create dedicated courts is as part of a larger court resurfacing project.

The addition of dedicated pickleball courts provides the needed space to generate new revenue through Parks & Recreation pickleball programming which is estimated to be \$1,000 to \$10,000 annually. Although dollar amounts are difficult to estimate, pickleball tournaments will bring visitors to Concord from outside the East Bay; thus infusing additional money into Concord's local economy.

Depending on the selected option, the expense range for enhanced pickleball facilities at Willow Pass Park range from a few thousand for portable nets to \$39,000 to fully convert 4 tennis courts to 14 dedicated single purpose pickleball courts. Although the backlog of deferred maintenance throughout the park system was estimated at \$19.7 million in Fiscal Year 2014-15, there is not a substantial difference in the ongoing maintenance costs for pickleball or tennis courts.

**Public Contact**

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space agenda was posted in accordance with legal requirements. In addition, this report was sent directly to primary contacts with the Concord Tennis Club and the pickleball advocacy group.

**Alternative Courses of Action**

Staff is seeking specific input and feedback on the following alternative courses of action:

1. The concept of converting 4 existing tennis courts to 14 dedicated pickleball courts at Willow Pass Park (**see graphical example on page 9 of this report**). This option provides the most robust opportunity to enhance pickleball programming

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including instructional classes and clinics, drop-in play, and the potential to attract and offer pickleball leagues/tournaments. The cost for installing pickleball courts in conjunction with the tennis courts resurfacing project at Willow Pass Park is \$39,000 (currently unbudgeted). If the dedicated pickleball court approach is desired, the ability to complete installation while court resurfacing is occurring is dependent on funding. With PROSC endorsement, staff may present the bid alternative and request an additional allocation of funds to perform this work at an upcoming City Council meeting. **This option represents the staff recommendation.**

2. The concept of continuing to offer pickleball to the community by painting “overlying” pickleball court lines on existing tennis courts at Willow Pass Park (see **graphical example on page 10 of this report**). This option continues to provide an opportunity for the community to play pickleball using portable nets during specific programming periods when staff are available to set up and take down equipment. A total of 8 pickleball courts would be painted at no additional cost; the Parks & Recreation Department would purchase additional portable nets and paddles as necessary for approximately \$3,000 using existing budgeted funds.

**Recommendation for Action**

Staff recommends that the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Commission concur with staff’s recommendation to repurpose four (4) tennis courts at Willow Pass Park into fourteen (14) dedicated pickleball courts as discussed above; and authorizes staff to present this finding to City Council for their approval and seek \$39,000 of additional funds for inclusion in the tennis courts resurfacing project.



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**A current CIP for tennis court resurfacing was approved during the mid-year budget process for all eight tennis courts at Willow Pass Park and three of the seven tennis courts located at Concord Community Park.**

The picture below shows the existing 8 lighted tennis courts located at Willow Pass Park, 4 dual purpose pickleball courts using portable nets are also available at this location:





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The photo below shows tennis court facilities at Concord Community Park. Three of the seven tennis courts located at Concord Community Park will be resurfaced. These courts have been out of service because of severe cracking and safety concerns since 2008.



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Graphical example of 4 of the 8 existing tennis courts at Willow Pass Park converted to 14 dedicated use pickleball courts. Cost provided by tennis court resurfacing contractor is \$39,000.



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Graphical example of dual purpose tennis and pickleball courts. Pickleball court lines can be overlay painted on each side of existing tennis court nets to create 8 pickleball courts (at Willow Pass Park) using portable nets installed at specific times for drop-in play and programs.

