



Item No.5c Town of Atherton

PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE – REGULAR AGENDA

TO: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

FROM: SALLY BENTZ-DALTON – PARK MANAGER

DATE: MARCH 2ND, 2022

SUBJECT: Consideration of adding a pickle ball court at HPP

Discussion

At the February 2nd Park & Rec meeting the Committee received public comments on the possibility of adding a pickleball court to Holbrook-Palmer Park.

Park & Rec can review discuss and review the pros and cons of adding new courts or converting some of the tennis courts to pickle ball courts.

A pickleball court is not part of the Holbrook-Palmer Park's Master Plan.

Staff will need to consider if a court can be converted permanently, converted prior to play or if a court can be added just for pickleball.

Information about pickleball:

Court

A pickleball court is smaller than a tennis court, it is 20' x 44' for both singles and doubles. And unlike tennis where you can volley from anywhere, in pickleball a non-volley zone extends 7' back from the net on each side, commonly called "the kitchen". The tennis court size is a rectangle as well, 78 feet long and, for singles matches, 27 feet wide. For doubles matches, the court is 36 feet wide.

Net

In pickleball the net is a bit lower than in tennis. The net in pickleball is hung at 36" at the ends and 34" in the middle, and in tennis the height of the net at the center is 3 feet.

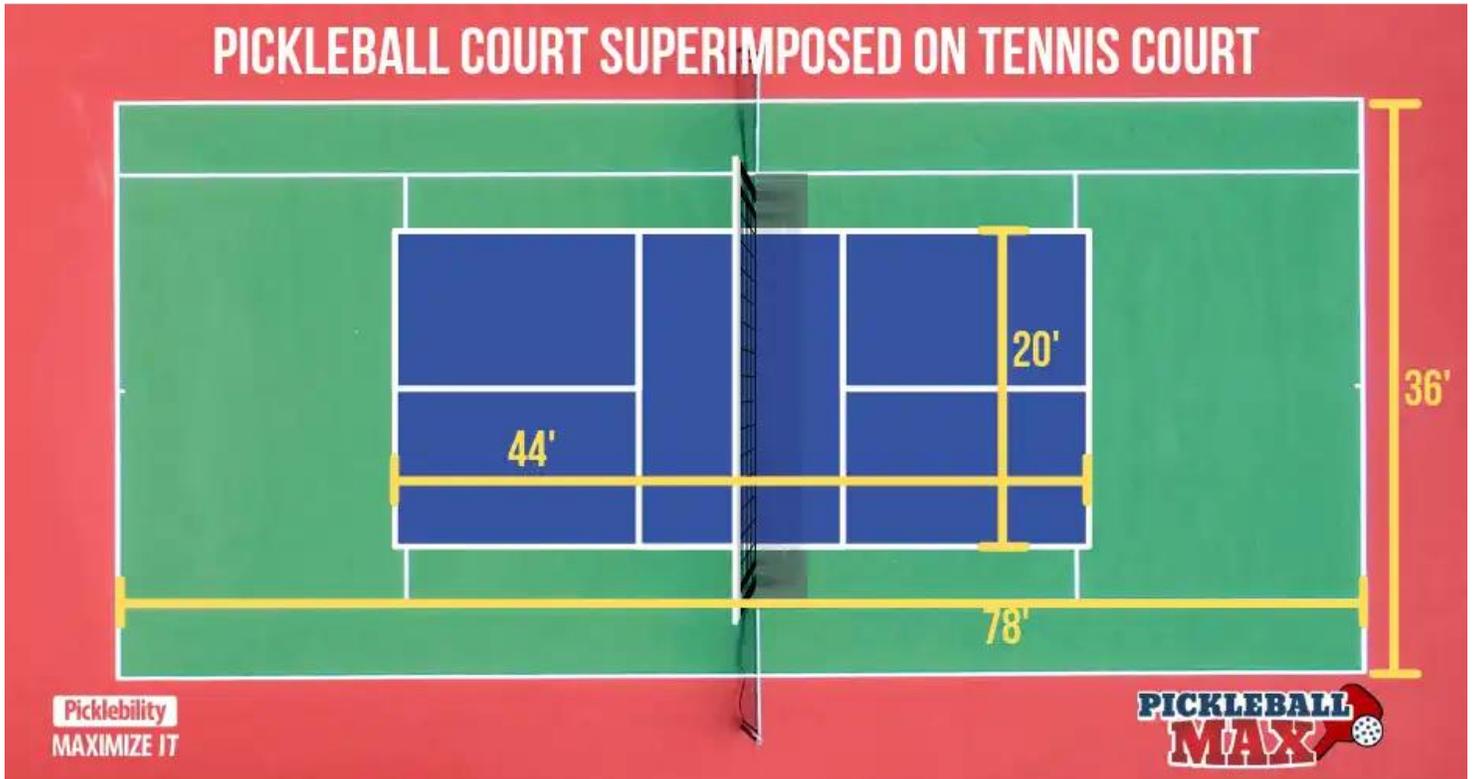
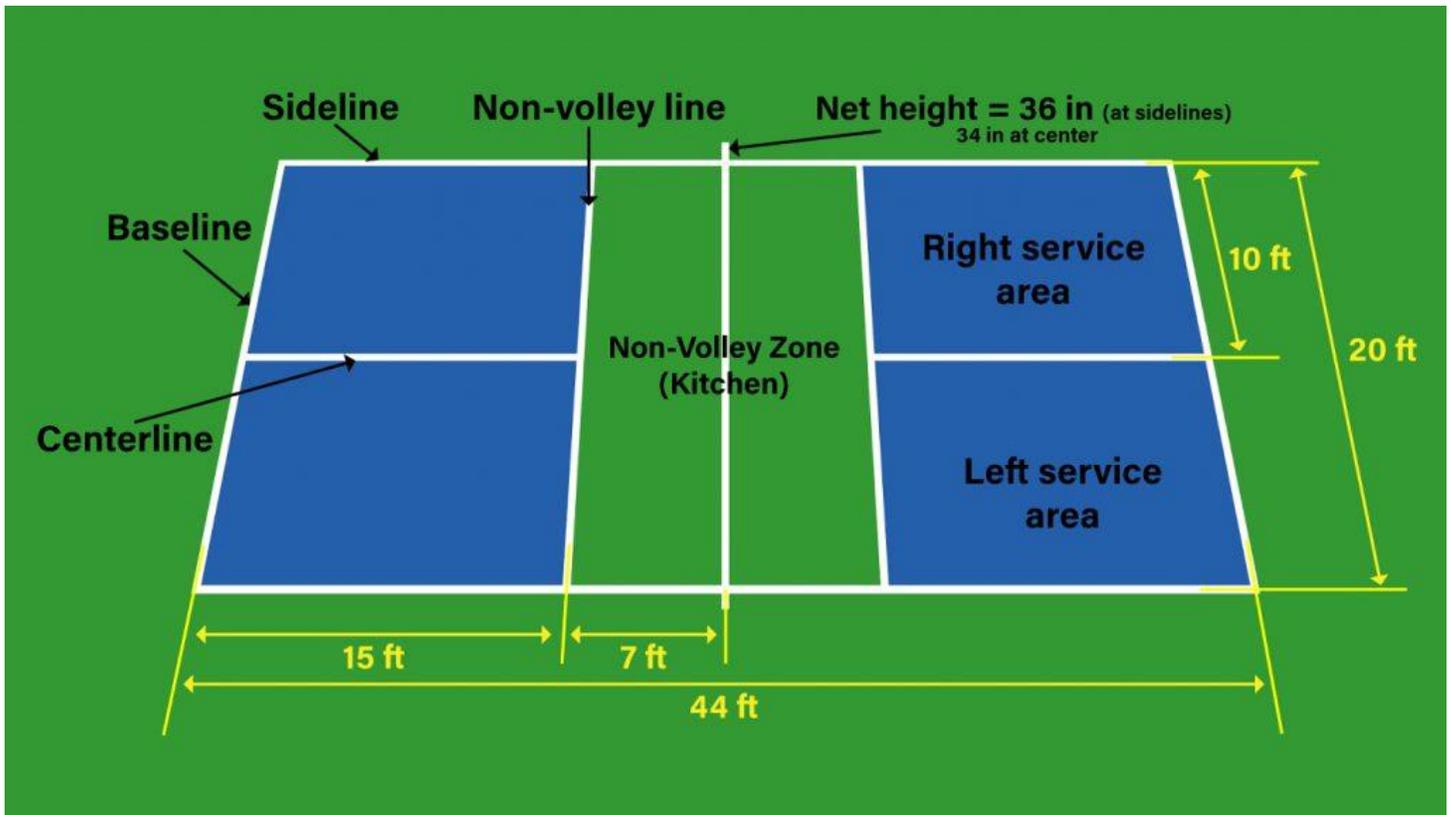
Ball

The balls used in tennis and pickleball are different as well. For pickleball, the official pickleball is made of plastic and is between 2 7/8 inches to 3 inches in diameter and weighs between .08 and 1.02 ounces. There are no color restrictions other than the ball must be a single, consistent color. The USAPA has tested and approved a number of outdoor and indoor balls for official tournament play.

Racquets

Racquets used in pickleball are smaller than the ones used in tennis, and constructed of different materials. Competitive paddles used in pickleball are constructed from a high-tech composite, ranging in cost from \$50-\$150 each. Pickleball paddles are a solid surface.







Public Comment

Thank you for the opportunity to bring up the topic of pickleball at tonight's meeting. I look forward to a continuing dialogue. I have pasted below what I said tonight as well as a link to a Google Spreadsheet where I computed the lack of utilization and decrease in court hours.

Hi, my name is Noah Eisner. I've been a resident of Atherton for 2.5 years and resident of adjacent towns over the last 20 years. Today, I'd like to bring up the issue of setting up Pickleball courts at lightly used tennis courts at Holbrook Palmer.

About 9 months ago, a friend asked me to play Pickleball. Within a month I was hooked. It's an approachable and social game played by people of all ages and abilities. According to the Economist, it is America's fastest growing sport. While trade industry numbers can be questioned, you can't question what you see at the courts. While there are no public facilities in Atherton. The most prominent facility is Mitchell Park in Palo Alto. Mitchell has 8 permanent Pickleball courts, along with 6 courts that are lined for both tennis and Pickleball. It's not uncommon to have 50 players out there at any one time as the demand is so high. The community is vibrant, sociable, and wide range of ages and skill level.

Menlo Park has been running a pilot Pickleball program at Nealon and Kelly parks. At Nealon for example, one of the 5 tennis courts was converted to 4 Pickleball courts at a total cost of \$2300. At most times during the day 1 or 2 tennis courts are in use serving 2-4 people. Meanwhile, the Pickleball courts are packed with 16 people playing on the 4 courts. The reception to the program was outstanding and MP made the program permanent last week. At the P&R meeting, 21 community members joined the Zoom to voice their support. I heard a 80+ year old woman talk about the fun of playing every day and the great people she has met. I heard a 3rd grader talk. Teenagers are playing with older people. It's inclusive. The community is asking for more courts at Nealon and possible at other town parks. The Town is going to explore that to meet community demand.

Now let's turn to Holbrook Palmer. As I mentioned, the 5 hard courts and 1 clay court are infrequently used. Over the last month, I made over a half dozen trips at random times on nice days to see how many people were taking advantage of the courts. On most of my random inspections, 1 or 2 courts were in use and sometimes just for Individual lessons. On the most busy day, I saw 3 hard courts in use - 1 courts being used for singles play. And an individual lesson being given on 2 different courts. That translates to 4 community members playing tennis on the hard courts. And then I go over to Nealon and see 16 people playing Pickleball on a single tennis court.

And the proof is actually in the data. In the minutes of the last meeting where Player Capital talked backed in September, they mentioned a 40% increase in usage during Covid. That's not true using current data. In the park reports, I compared court hours from the latest 3 months to the same period from the previous year. Total court hours are down 9.2%. What is sadder is the lack of utilization. There are roughly 9-10 daylight hours in the winter, but the 6 courts have had only 845 hours of usage total. The effective utilization is under 20%. That's means that in reality, only 1 court on average is in use. And just a week ago, I created a petition to add Pickleball at Holbrook Palmer and barely publicized it. Yet just before this meeting, I checked and there are over 140 signatures and lots of positive comments. That's community support!

I don't know the agreement with Player Capital, but I do know that the community is not being best served by a tennis only facility at Holbrook Palmer. In the Sept 1st, 2021 minutes, it states "Jessup mentioned the possibility of exploring a large donation for naming the courts and in response to a question explained why adding a pickleball court was not feasible." I'm not sure the relevance of the donation, but I know from Palo Alto and Menlo Park's findings, Pickleball courts are not only feasible, but they are a community gem.

Respectfully, I ask the committee to revisit this topic for setting up Pickleball courts at Holbrook Palmer Park. I will send a copy of this and my data to you all and the Town Council. Thank you!

DATA ON PARK USAGE: PDF ATTACHED