

# Pickleball Advisory Group Meeting 2 Meeting Summary

June 25, 2024

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# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Pickleball Advisory Group.....	3
Meetings Timeline.....	3
Meeting Purpose.....	3
Attendance .....	4
Summary.....	4
Meeting Minutes.....	6
Next Steps.....	12
Appendix A – Agenda.....	16

# Introduction

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This report summarizes the second Pickleball Advisory Group (PAG) meeting, which was held virtually on Wednesday, June 12, 2024, from 7 to 9 p.m.

Visit the [project webpage](#) for more information.

## Pickleball Advisory Group

Members of the PAG offer their perspectives, guidance and advice to the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) Division. They support and advance the short- and long-term plans for more pickleball access across the City of Toronto for all ages, and help guide policy and program considerations, such as pickleball programming, permitting and court provision.

## Meetings Timeline

The following are topics that will be focused on for the six planned PAG meetings. Dates are tentative, and members will be given at least a one- to two-week notice in advance of a meeting date:

- May 15, 2024 – Welcome & Work Planning
- June 12, 2024 – Programs – **We're here**
- July 17, 2024 – Outdoor Courts
- September 11, 2024 – Permits
- October 23, 2024 – Supporting Pickleball
- November 27, 2024 – Year End Review

## Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Finalize the Terms of Reference for the group
- Discuss indoor drop-in pickleball program procedures
- Collaborate on an introductory pickleball program curriculum

## Attendance

### PAG Members Present

- Albert B
- Annette S
- Carolyn C
- Helen G
- Jeff V
- John C
- Junior B
- Margaret J
- Mark J
- Mary Beth D
- Mike K
- Selina L
- Sid I

### Project Staff Present

- Elijah Bawuah, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator
- Sandra McCallum, Manager, Community Recreation Toronto East York
- Natalie DiFonzo, Program Standards & Development Officer
- Kevin Carr, Manager Client Services
- Matt Bentley, Senior Project Manager, Facilities Master Plan
- Vanessa Cipriani, Policy & Project Advisor
- Jason Gomes, Project Manager Capital Projects

## Summary

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The City of Toronto has established a Pickleball Advisory Group (PAG) to support the development of the sport, and to guide policy and procedure-related considerations, such as programming, permitting and court provision. The goal is to expand pickleball access across the city for players of all ages.

The second PAG meeting, held on Wednesday, June 12, 2024, opened with a Land Acknowledgement, an African Ancestral Acknowledgement and a review of the code of conduct. The meeting proceeded with introductions of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) project staff, the meeting schedule and upcoming agenda topics. The meeting summary from the first meeting was approved with one requested edit for clarification, to be amended before the summary is published. The Terms of Reference were there then unanimously approved by the group without feedback.

The meeting then shifted to the agenda topic for the evening, focusing on pickleball programs. Feedback pertaining to programs that was received from the survey at the establishment of the group was shared. Sandra McCallum, City of Toronto, then shared an overview of pickleball program growth in the last year, including number of programs, program hours, drop-in visits, and registered visits. To contextualize the focus of the meeting, one of the recommendations from the Pickleball Play in Toronto report (2023.IE4.5) was reviewed that requested PFR to provide introductory pickleball opportunities through outreach, programming, and access to affordable equipment in PFR facilities.

The group then used the Miro Board application to collect feedback from PAG members on instructional and drop-in pickleball programming at PFR Community Centres.

Updates and announcements were shared. The group was informed that through the capital budget plan for 2024, money has been allocated to improve and replace court infrastructure, to support both tennis and pickleball play in the city. The planning phase of this capital work will entail public consultation for the proposed redesigns.

It was also shared that four new pickleball court lines have been painted in McCowan District Park, facility users will need to bring their own nets. Also included in the announcements was the Etobicoke Pickleball Associations regional qualifying tournament for the Ontario Seniors Games being held on June 21 at the Etobicoke Olympium.

A final call for feedback was made, and a reminder for the next meeting.

## Meeting Minutes

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### **PAG Member Question/Comment and Project Team Response**

**Q:** What were the utilization rates for drop-in programming in 2022 and 2023?

- *We do not capture utilization rates for drop-in programming. We collect program hours and program visits as a performance measure for drop-in programs.*
- *Our current registration system is limited in its capacity to capture drop-in program metrics.*

**Q:** How do you know what types of facilities you need to build if you don't know the utilization rates? What is the capacity threshold you would look at to start building?

- *Our program maximums are determined by our staff to participant ratio policy. Program maximums are also dependent on the size of space.*

**Q:** You said you had formed a committee to develop instructional lessons. Could you tell us who is on that committee?

- *We have formed a subcommittee made up of subject matter experts from our sport recreation service team. These are internal staff with interest and experience in pickleball who are working to develop the instructional curriculum.*

**Q:** Is McCowan District Park a hockey rink? We have been trying to get additional court lines painted at Dieppe and are still waiting.

- *Yes, it is a rink. McCowan District Park is the only outdoor rink in Scarborough, so we were able to expedite the work for that community.*

**Q:** When you are looking at sites for improvement through this capital funding opportunities, will some of these sites be dedicated pickleball sites? Tennis and pickleball don't always get along.

- *Geography has a lot to do with the decisions that will be made. If courts are in close proximity we may have more flexibility to convert to dedicated courts, instead of split courts.*

**Q:** Do you have to do surveys of local residents for all dedicated pickleball courts? What happened in Scarborough to expedite it, so we can learn?

- *Not all courts are dedicated solely to pickleball. Similar to Kew Gardens, Ramsden is a shared space. There are other program opportunities that can still take place in these shared spaces.*
- *Whenever we are looking to permanently change an asset, we do a community consultation.*

**Q:** Will you be bringing the proposed locations for capital improvements to the Pickleball Advisory Group first?

- *The criteria for the sites has been established, based on their current need for repair status, and if there was a project plan in place in the next five years.*
- *We also look at geographic equity, so the refurbished assets can be spread across the city.*
- *Scarborough has always been a challenge because of their history with club courts, there are fewer public courts in the district.*

**Q:** Are there directions as to how we would incorporate permitting and storage of nets?

- *The scope of this committee has been done strategically to address these different issues. We will be getting into permitting in a future meeting.*
- *Between programming, permits and open play, it's important to find a balance between those three styles of play. We will continue this conversation in a future meeting.*

**Q:** In terms of the rehabilitation projects, are any of the courts in the core of the city, or will most of them be outside the core?

- *We are trying to reach everywhere as much as possible. We are trying to identify locations where pickleball will work and looking at the density of the population and demand in those areas.*
- *One challenge is that some of these courts have been around for decades, and the city has grown around them. We have had to remove other assets in the past due to the growing surrounding infrastructure.*
- *We are looking to maximize use of existing locations and looking to expand where possible.*

**Q:** Other legacy groups have permitted premium times and pay a minimal amount, while pickleball is paying full cost for these spaces. We cannot get access because these legacy groups own the permit, and they are not using the space. How can we work through this?

- *We can connect offline about your experience.*

**C:** We try to get a hold of our permit officer and find out there has been another staffing change. By the time we get a hold of someone for what we want, the space is no longer available. It has been a big struggle for us.

- *We acknowledge it is a busy time for year for summer operations. We have also had some staff turnover. We can connect offline as well.*

**Q:** I am disturbed to hear about the disparity between fees for clubs. We would like to know why this might be the case. Are the fees uniform, or an hourly fee?

- *My understanding is that this information is false, and fees are based off the facility and not the activity. These are all council approved fees. All outdoor sports using rinks should be paying the same fee.*
- *I am happy to confirm at the next meeting.*



## Miro Board Activity

A total of 11 questions were prepared to facilitate a discussion regarding Pickleball programing with PAG members. Five of the questions prepared (Q. 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11) were not presented to the group due to time constraints, but the remainder were presented, and feedback received from group members is included in this section of the report.

### Question 1: What age groups should instructional programs be developed for?



Mary Beth: Biggest group is adults. Pickleball spaces are filled with adults who want to learn and play. Day time dominated by seniors.

Pilot a small program for kids.

Margaret: Etobicoke pickleball introductory program exists. Why do we need new ones if there are ones already working?

**Question 2: What is the ideal program length for an instructional class? (i.e., 1 hour, 2 hours).**

Carolyn: 2-3 hours. Instructional time for an hour. Play time afterwards. Too long of an instructional period gets redundant. 90 minutes max.

John: 2 hours. Instruction for an hour-hour and twenty-minutes. Players tested on shots and form taught.

Learn to play = 1 time, 2 hours. Usually folks take an instructional class once. Few take it an additional time. Afterwards, majority of players move on to level 1 classes.

Albert: 1 hour clinic. Was way too short. Changed to 90 minutes, but then no time for free play afterwards. Changed to 2 hours, with 1 hour for instructional. Consider costs of instructor for instructional period. Would not do less than 90 minutes for instructional period. Minimum 2 hours for entire class.

John: Learn to play is only required once. Players play on their own to gain additional experience for 1-2 months. Sometimes folks may come back and retake the instructional course. They place folks based on their skill level after they take the instructional course. Advice provided on how they can play and where, etc.

Carolyn: If thinking about a sequence of lessons, programs should be broken up on skills to be learned (serve week, rules week, etc.)

Mary Beth: Two hours max. People drop off after that during ETPA sessions, 1-1/2 is good. Lesson with time to play. But at the YMCA we do one hour weekly which is fine too.

Michael: Focus on drills and techniques for the first 1.15 hour then spend rest of time playing a match. 2 hour is a sweet spot

**Question 3: What is the ideal program duration for an instructional course? (i.e., 3 weeks, 9 weeks).**

Helen: 4-6 weeks. 4 weeks has been working so far.

Carolyn: yes shorter number of sessions as per mary beth

Mary Beth: 1.5 hour to 2 hours intro to pickleball. 3-4 week commitments is where people start to drop off. Encourage a single two-hour session.

Annette: Suggest Learn to Play - 3 hours. Intro to Play - 4 weeks. Does single learn to play sessions. There is interest from players to learn more beyond introductory courses through Mayfair and Scarborough programs.

**Question 4: How would you structure the instructional program? Considered skill development, game play, warm ups, etc.**

Mary Beth: Instructors tend to have their own style of teaching. In general, ensure you have intro, warm-ups, technique sessions, and then leave an hour or two for free play. Instructors normally how to run their sessions as it's part of their certification.

Albert: Session 1 - Level 1

Learn To Play

This session is geared to individuals with little to no pickleball experience. This session will be focused on game rules and basic skills.

Session 2 - Level 2

Beginners

This session is geared to individuals who have played but would benefit from learning game strategies to improve their game.

Session 3 - Level 3

Intermediate

This session is geared to individuals who have played but would benefit in learning more technique in hitting, shot selection, positioning and more.

John: NCCP -  
National  
Coaching  
Certification  
Program

Carolyn and Mary Beth:  
Instructors should be certified by  
Pickleball Canada.

Carolyn: Emphasis on instructors  
understanding scoring. Sessions  
at Ramsden were missing  
important teachables of  
pickleball.

**Question 6: How many participants should the program accommodate at a time?  
What is the course registration maximum, based on a single staff?**

Mary Beth: Figure out how many courts you have first to understand the space limitations. 1 court for 8 people. Think about it more per court (i.e. 4-6 people per court).

Albert: Instructor used did not like having over 6 people. 6 people on one court was preferred by the instructor at the time.

Sid: 6  
per  
court

JP: 8  
students 2  
courts 1  
instructor.

Jeff: 2  
courts 8  
people one  
instructor.

John: 12-24 if double gym is secured for 12 straight sessions. 1 person managing each court for beginner lessons. Everyone is playing and no one is sitting. John has done 8-16. 4 people per court.

Carolyn: 4 is optimal per court depending on how many courts you have. Instructors are on the court playing as well. You can teach more than 4 such as up to 6 or 8, but 4 is optimal. 1 person managing 4 courts is difficult already.



**Question 9: If you could change 3 things about our drop-in programming, what would they be?**

Mary Beth: More evening drop-in programs to accommodate those working throughout the day.

Albert: Too much time required to get into a drop-in program. If program started at 6, you needed to show up at 5 to secure a spot to play. This does not work for folks who work during the day. Some places required you to show up 90-minutes in advance. Some places open drop-ins a week in advance and allow for online signup. City of Vaughan charging 6.75. You are notified in advance if you have secured a court to play. Notified online.

John: Level play is important as well as after hour play. Consider morning play. There is a 6:15 a.m., group that frequently shows up. Do not overbook. 24-25 waiting list for 12 spots.

Carolyn: \$8 per court. Consider an online registration portal. Max it at 8 per court and have a waitlist. Include an incentive to ensure people are cancelling in advance if needed - such as a penalty for no-shows. Provide reasoning as to why folks are not able to book a court.

## Next Steps

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The third PAG meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 17, 2024, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Subject Matter Experts will be present to help answer questions related to programs.

# Appendix A – Agenda

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## **Pickleball Advisory Group Meeting 2**

Date: Wednesday, June 12, 2024

Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Location: Virtual Meeting (Webex)

<b>Time</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
7:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agenda</li><li>• Land Acknowledgement</li><li>• African Ancestral Acknowledgement</li><li>• Code of Conduct</li></ul>
7:10 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcome and Introductions<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Parks, Forestry &amp; Recreation Staff</li><li>○ Pickleball Advisory Group Members</li></ul></li></ul>
7:20 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confirming May 15 2024, Meeting Notes</li></ul>
7:25 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confirming 2024 Terms of Reference</li></ul>
7:30 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pickleball Programs<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ 2023 Program Overview</li><li>○ Pickleball Play in Toronto (2023.IE.4.5) recommendation</li><li>○ Instructional Program Design</li><li>○ Drop-in Program Process and Design</li></ul></li></ul>
8:30 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Updates and Announcements<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ State of Good Repair Program for Court Refurbishment</li><li>○ Etobicoke Pickleball Association Regional Qualifying Tournament</li><li>○ New Courts at McCowan District Park</li></ul></li></ul>
8:55 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Next Steps and Closing Remarks</li></ul>
9:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adjourn</li></ul>