

# Pickleball Advisory Group Meeting 6

## Meeting Summary

December 3, 2024

### Introduction

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This report summarizes the sixth Pickleball Advisory Group (PAG) meeting, which was held virtually on Wednesday, November 27, from 7 to 9 p.m. The meeting was the year-end review that summarized the discussion topics over the last five meetings, and highlighted key discussions by members and actions by staff. An open-end conversation invited members to share ideas on how the city can continue to support pickleball in new ways. The group then identified outstanding issues for consideration to be revisited in the new year. The terms of reference were reviewed and it was acknowledged that the group purpose and outcomes will be undergoing an annual review before any future meetings are scheduled.

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. Their contributions are critical in advancing the development of short- and long-term plans for pickleball access across the City of Toronto. The group plays a vital role in guiding policy development and program considerations, including the design and provision of outdoor courts and the integration of pickleball into the City's broader recreation strategy.

### 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
- July 17, 2024 – Outdoor Courts
- September 11, 2024 – Permits
- October 23, 2024 – Supporting Pickleball
- November 27, 2024 – Year End Review – **We're here**

### Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Review the progress of the Pickleball Advisory Group, including feedback received and actions taken across different focus areas

- Host an open ended discussion on how the City can further support pickleball development
- Identify outstanding issues and priority topics for 2025

## **Attendance**

### **PAG Members Present**

- Carolyn C
- John C
- Mary Beth D
- Helen G
- Sid I
- Annette S
- Sue P

### **Project Staff Present**

- Matt Bentley, Senior Project Manager Facilities Master Plan
- Joshua Bowman, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator
- Jen Ciavoliello, Operations Support Officer
- Vanessa Cipriani, Planner
- Chris Clarke, Manager Parks
- Natalie DiFonzo, Program Standards & Development Officer
- Jason Gomes, Project Manager Capital Projects & Initiatives
- Sandra McCallum, Manager Community Recreation

## **Summary**

The final meeting of the Pickleball Advisory Group (PAG) met on November 27, 2024 to discuss the work and progress to date by the group. The sixth meeting began with a Land Acknowledgement, an African Ancestral Acknowledgement, and a review of the code of conduct. The agenda was reviewed and then the meeting transitioned to the evenings topic; conducting a year-end review.

The review followed the years agenda topics; community recreation programs, outdoor courts and amenities, permits and supporting pickleball. For each topic, subject matter experts from the respective branch reviewed what they presented during the meeting, reiterated the key feedback they heard from the group, and then shared any work that has been completed or is ongoing as a result of PAG feedback. Following each section, members were asked to identify any key concepts that were not represented.

The group then began a discussion on how the city can further advance pickleball and support the development of the sport, which had been deferred from the previous

meeting. Following the discussion, the group was then asked what topics of discussion should be prioritized for future meetings. This activity was intended to give active members an influence on future agendas.

The Terms of Reference were then reviewed with the group. The Terms of Reference state that the group will be reviewed on an annual basis, and a year-end report is to be completed. Next steps for the PAG includes completion of the year-end report and an internal review of the progress and effectiveness of the group and identifying any outstanding issues. Members will be contacted following the completion of the internal review to advise on future meetings.

The previous meetings minutes were then approved unanimously. During an opportunity to share updates and announcements, a reminder for the Facilities Plan survey was shared with the group. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

## Meeting Minutes

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### Legend

**A:** Answer

**C:** Comment

**Q:** Question

**R:** Response

### Pickleball Programs Slide:

**Q:** This is all about the stuff going on inside existing community centres, is that correct?

**A:** Yes, that is correct. The area that I work in is indoor recreation, so we are talking about programming that is held inside our recreation centres.

### Outdoor Courts Slide:

**C:** The back on track courts program, I had a chance to look at some of that after our last meeting. I think we sent you an e-mail and we did not get a response. The head of Toronto East York Pickleball Association reached out to you as well.

**R:** I referred those e-mails to a colleague; I believe I referred it because I think it was discussing some permitting issues and then I believe Rosemary responded to all other inquiries.

**C:** No. They were questions about the back on track program.

**R:** Fair enough. I will review them again. I know that there were a few I referred to other people.

**C:** For example, I know we picked three locations. So East Toronto I think has three locations, Prairie Drive, McGregor Park and Topham Park. Our suggestion is to consult

some of the pickleball experts before you start diving into even doing community consultations, because a location like Topham Park is five feet away from somebody's house. And as everyone knows on here who is a pickleball player, that is just asking for world war three. And to even put it out there and ask about pickleball courts is going to create a lot of problems for East Toronto Pickleball Association and other people who are going to have to deal with the blow back. So, it would be really great if there could be some discussion and consultation and engagement with the people who know those locations and know the sport.

**R:** I agree, this is something we can easily facilitate and I, in truth, also wanted to perhaps have discussions about initiating some meetings with the design consultant as well to get your feedback. This is something that we are definitely mindful of. Your point concerning Topham, I will certainly look into that. I can see how that can be problematic.

**C:** If that is chosen as the potential location for pickleball courts, and that covers a big swath of area, and that is actually a venue that is just not going to fly for pickleball courts. I know maybe there is some way that somebody can figure it out, but anyway it is just a problem for us. So that leaves two locations in pretty much all of East Toronto in the Back on Track program. It would really be great if we could have some conversation. I don't know if you're leading this or someone else is, or if there is an outside consultant, but how is that working and how do we get involved? How do you leverage what we already know about all of these venues?

**R:** Yes, I agree. I can certainly look into those e-mails. I know that I received several of them. Some were unrelated to the back on track program. If you can just confirm my e-mail.

**C:** I sent it to you. I sent one and so did the president from East Toronto Pickleball Association, he called you this week. So anyway, you have my e-mail address, so just putting that out there that back on track is great, but some of the venues are just not suitable at all for pickleball.

**R:** Ok, understood. I will look into this and provide you with more information.

**C:** It all sounds great. I'm sure the report is going to be great, but I will be honest and say this is all slow. We've been talking about this for a long time and other municipalities have dedicated courts or have shovels in the ground, even major cities like Calgary and Hamilton. And so, all of these advancements sound great, but myself and other people who are on this committee who have large pickleball player groups and represent thousands of players are taking the heat every day for the lack of courts. And if we have another summer with no courts, it's going to be tough.

## **Permitting Slide:**

No comments or questions were shared.

## **Signs Slide:**

No comments or questions were shared.

## Supporting Pickleball Discussion:

### Question 1: Where do you want to see pickleball play in Toronto five years from now?

#### Answers:

**C:** We want pickleball courts throughout all three wards in Etobicoke. We've sent some drawings, we've gone to the three locations and we measured the courts and provided drawings for both tennis and pickleball. We'd have both tennis and pickleball, with a separated piece for pickleball. Like Martin Grove has two tennis courts and four pickleball courts. We have lost out on Rotary Park, but we're not going to give up. We recognize tennis is still a pretty popular sport, and we have to try to figure out how to use that space together. We want more pickleball in the indoor environment, there just isn't enough. Our members are playing at Cloverdale Mall as well as community centres, we're filling up as much space as we can get. There is just a massive interest to play year-round, not just outside. On the outside piece, we would love to see a whole number of pickleball courts. Let's say there are 80 tennis courts, why can't there be 25 pickleball courts and 60 tennis courts instead. That is what I would like to see in five years.

**C:** The downtown City of Toronto has no real estate. We have lots of players, lots of residents, and whatever centres we do have are bursting at the seams. They can't build community centres fast enough, and they aren't building too many new ones. Of course, there is Regent Park that has been rehabilitated and they have incorporated pickleball into it, but it's not nearly enough. I am an advocate for adding more if you can find park space in the downtown area, because obviously that is where there is huge population growth, lots of condos downtown and people need recreation. I would definitely push for downtown just because it is so little space and so little places for them to play.

**C:** I agree, with downtown, we have the density and need for courts. I have not yet been contacted about dedicated pickleball, which is what we're really all here for. If I have missed something in the central core, south of the 401 to the lake, please let me know. We do not have the facilities outdoors other than scattered courts, individual courts. A lot of this meeting is looking at trying to get dedicated space. So, in Etobicoke they have been able to create space, and we certainly hope we can get courts in the east end, but there is nothing here in a status basis to tell me we're moving forward in the central downtown area for dedicated pickleball, and yet we have the density. It's nice to add new courts, one or two, but the value of adding a number of courts, six to twelve, we are just not seeing. When is this happening, have I missed something on this? This is what people are asking. We have this subway system, the density, and the condos. Who can speak to that at this meeting? We would like to see dedicated space downtown without having to go way out west or east.

**R:** We did share in the slide about outdoor courts that we are working on projects, one for a complex that includes pickleball in the south district. That falls sort of downtown.

We're also working on other complexes in the east and the north. The south location has not been finalized yet, but it will be apart of the 2025 budget. When we have more information on that, we will be able to share actual specific details with you. We have also shared that there are some other projects in ward 11, so that is the Little Italy area. It is all to come, next year.

**R:** The reason you haven't heard about a lot of these projects is because they are not currently in our capital plan, and that is what the five-year review is advancing. We are capturing the need here, we hear it loud and clear. We are trying to get to a future state of comparable pickleball and tennis court numbers. That is what the five-year review will be able to do is give pickleball it's rightful place within the overarching court spectrum.

**Q:** I agree, we are not looking for one off courts. They're nice, but that's not how pickleball is played, that's how tennis is played. Pickleball is a sport that is played with large groups of people that cycle on and off the courts. So am I hearing you correctly that there is a plan in place for a sport complex in the east, but we don't know when and where it is, and it will have multiple pickleball courts?

**R:** There is. The districts align with our community council areas, so you can take a look at that. The east district is Scarborough. I think when you are referring to East Toronto, it is really more the south community council area. As we shared in the past, we do have a project in our capital plan that is for a tennis court complex, that will also consider pickleball. That was part of the Pickleball Play report to council, and that council direction was to include pickleball in those projects that were already captured in our capital plan. That has not changed. So, there is one project in the south, one in the east, and one in the north. If you want to know where the outlines of those districts are, I can share the community council map with you so you can see where those boundaries are.

**Q:** If you could send that to me, that would be great. I just want to be clear, this is new tennis courts that are coming, with consideration for pickleball. Does that mean there will be pickleball courts, or are you putting pickleball lines on tennis courts?

**R:** We do not have an exact design yet. That's the next step after we finalize locations, which we will be working on with the community and our capital team to see what that design looks like. We know the demand and the desire is there, and we're going to ensure these projects include pickleball.

**C:** For the record, and the notes, I can't remember how many tennis courts already exist in East Toronto, but it's a lot. And there are zero dedicated pickleball courts in East Toronto, so building more tennis courts makes zero sense to me. It is very frustrating to the pickleball people.

**R:** I just want to be clear, dedicated courts is our goal as well and so all of our projects will be considering dedicated pickleball courts. That is our goal, for the provision of pickleball.

**Q:** We talked about south and east. When we talk about east, what boundary does it start from? Conceivably south could be central downtown and east Toronto. When I say east Toronto I mean Victoria Park. I want to have clarification there, because if so, we

need two facilities, one that's in east Toronto, east of the Don Valley to Victoria park, and one down town. That's two facilities five years from now. So, could I just have a little bit of a revisit on that? Is it one facility in south district, meaning south and east? Or is it two separate areas way out of Scarborough and then still sharing one facility in central downtown and east of the Don Valley?

Has there been an exploration of working with the colleges and universities? I know since it is a growing sport I have looked into facilities and there were very few or next to no facilities in the central downtown core other than going to UofT in Scarborough. We would look to see if the City of Toronto could work in conjunction with the University of Toronto, with Ryerson, with George Brown, with these places to try to develop out or have some community space. These universities have a lot of land in the central core, especially UofT, has any one with the City approached the universities about co-oping space?

**A:** I know we have heard the term community council area mentioned a few times so far. The link to the community council map has been included in the chat. If you click the link, you will be able to look at the map: [Community Council Area Profiles – City of Toronto](#)

**A:** These are just the projects that are in our current capital plan. They do align with those community council area boundaries that I shared. But as mentioned, the five-year review gives us more direction and allows us to include further projects in the capital plan going forward. Like you said, there is not just one for a whole swath of area, which does go from east of the DVP to downtown.

**A:** We don't disagree that the need is greater than the capital plan, and that's exactly the intention of the five-year review. Currently, all we have in front of us is the funding that was allocated for what was, originally, tennis court complexes. So, we have council direction to consider pickleball, which you said is dedicated within those projects. But to your answer, do we need more projects across the city? Today I have heard Toronto downtown, midtown, other areas of the city, we expect that we will hear that demand is greater, and it is the five-year review that will allow us to modify our plans, and to what degree the city can afford to.

I can also follow up with the schools. We do reach out, not specifically on pickleball yet, but once we have the projects identified that we need, we reach out to colleges, universities, and the public school boards as well. We do this with sport fields a fair bit too. Through implementation, there is no secret that we have a scarcity of land, especially downtown, so creativity is probably going to be required to identify locations. The most important thing is that we capture the feedback from this group, which we will, and from the general public, and we expect we will hear lots about pickleball. We've got a major survey out across the city, and we have had thousands of responses, and we anticipate we will hear much of the same message across the city, which will help us in having the evidence we need for our recommendations going forward.

**Q:** If this goes into the budget by 2025, obviously there is going to be a few years, would we see these courts opening in 20thirty?

**A:** It would be sooner than that, a court project is a two-year project typically, with design and delivery. Pending approval of the budget, we anticipate some of these projects will go into design next year. That's the goal. The facilities plan is a 20-year plan, but we review it every five years. So, what will happen is the review process we're doing right now is probably going to result in increased recommendations or more projects for pickleball that will enter into our ten-year plan and try to advance or accelerate the way we respond to it. The projects we've already discussed are in the shorter-term part of our plan, not the longer term, so I would say we're looking at two or three years out.

**Q:** It would be great to have courts in more than just one location, because they are going to be servicing such a large area. It would be better to have two or three year-round facilities, then it would be to have just one place with a ton. There is the commuting aspect of it, and accessibility for all sorts of reasons.

**A:** Agree completely. That would be reflected in our plan, that's our current plan for tennis as well. Where in our original plan we had recommendations for smaller courts, as compared to bigger courts. If the existing facility plan is a guide, what we would expect through the facility plan is a provision level established for pickleball courts in the city, which we currently do not have, and that's what people are looking for. If you look at our plan now you'll see that for others, so it could be a number of courts per population, it could be a number of courts within a certain distance of residence, that sort of approach. With tennis, there is a two-kilometre buffer around courts, so our goal is to provide tennis court opportunity within two kilometres of residents.

**C:** I'm really liking how everything is moving here, just this whole committee has been great. Thank you, we're moving pickleball forward.

I just wanted to point out a couple of things mentioned about colleges. We reached out to Humber College, and we didn't have much success, they weren't overly interested in pickleball. But I have a drawing of all the courts inside the GTA, but in Mississauga they are partnering with the school board to put pickleball courts on school properties. I think it is fantastic. We had a meeting with Councillor Holyday, and when we mentioned this to him, he said 'tell me more'. We're trying to get courts at Holly Crest School and we're working with the school board. It's not easy, we're going to meet with some people in the schools in Mississauga so we can see how it all came to be and we can contribute and add value to the city to figure out how to do that, because it is another way to get courts. We just want more courts.

**R:** That is super helpful. It is an approach we have used for a number of other facility types as well. We know anecdotally that school boards are sitting on some deteriorating facilities. Not just tennis courts, but other flat surfaces as well. So certainly, through implementation, those are exactly the things that we will be willing to do and having support obviously, if the local councillor is on board, is helpful too.

**A:** You would think a lot of the universities would have the amenities, but they don't. It was sobering to go to a hub meeting with the University of Toronto, and with Toronto Metropolitan University, and find out the reluctance to even have it played in their



facilities in case it marks their floor - worried it would mar the lines. How could you do an operation or have a tournament. The thing we need to support pickleball is like what is happening out in Etobicoke, you get a mass of courts, so that if you're trying to not only do programs as an association or be there for a lot of individuals to go up in off times, having the mass support is great because it also means you can support tournaments. Even though the city isn't into supporting tournaments, it is there for the development of the sport. It is hard to see that when you approach these people directly that run the facilities in the central core, they are necessarily open to pickleball and are more worried about marring their courts and lines. It's not just outdoor but indoor play, we'd like to see more year-round play.

## **Question 2: What are other ways we can support access to amenities?**

**A:** Something I brought up in previous meetings – when we have courts, a mass of courts that serves a large population, like we have at the ice rinks, that we have a policy in place that is clear and explains in the permit process, what amenities you get as a group, here is the access you have at this particular facility. I expect when dedicated courts come out, there are going to be some amenities hopefully, not just the courts. At least that's what I would like to see. What are the amenities that will draw people to play there? When you are in an ice rink operation, there should be a published piece that would say 'hey, you have this right as a permit holder, to be able to access xx amenity'. What are we doing about getting access to a building, to storage, etc? Nets in pickleball, unless you have dedicated pickleball, it is all about nets. People bringing nets, storing nets, what do we do about the nets. How do we incorporate a standard for amenities, for our permit holders to know they know where to go, what they can get. It's not just renting the actual dry pad. I haven't seen any response on that at current or future locations. That's how you can support access – by making it easier for people to know what it is they are going to be renting so they can do their operation.

**R:** You mentioned signs at one point as a way we can support access to amenities. Can you expand on that a little bit?

**A:** Signage is really dependent on that actual location that we are talking about. Initially when this all came about and there was a discussion about a thirty-minute rule on tennis courts. What has become clear is that would be for a shared tennis court facility with pickleball lines on it. The incorporation of creating signage for dedicated pickleball is what is still up in the air. It seems that groups are going to be able to permit dedicated pickleball in the future, and it means that when the courts are not permitted, there may be free play time. So that brings into play signage at dedicated facilities. If we are not sharing with tennis courts, why are we adding a thirty-minute rule at a dedicated facility, like the one opening up in Etobicoke. That one may be a model for the future facilities, so what was the question. If it's not shared with tennis, it's not shared with any other sport, how then would we like to handle it? Rather than having people tying up a court that will have actual nets for half an hour, we'd like to see that even in the non permitted hours at that facility, that community members can come in and play and still have this rotation, and everyone gets together to use those dedicated courts during non permitted

times. What happens if permitting is approved for dedicated courts? What happens in the non permitted times? Because is that stained thirty minutes for everyone to come on for half an hour, or is it shared, where you reach the number four per court and then when it starts going over, people automatically go on a rotation basis with a rack system. That was the question on that. So that still has to be discussed here today. Ice rinks, the third area, we were told we are permitting with all sports. We don't have a dedicated use of the rinks, it's for all sports. This is the area that so many people come to play at the rinks, and yet that situation of trying to create a signage that limits it to thirty minutes when people have to bring their own nets doesn't work and a rack system would work but a question that still has to be answered is are we also to share in a non permitted time in an ice rink with other sports? Where does that thirty-minute rule come in? Because it's not a tennis court, it is an ice pad, and we need to work on that interpretation because it's years before we have dedicated pickleball. More fleshing out on that is needed. Many of the facilities that I have taken a look at – where they have public access to come on and play is for pickleball, it's not for hockey or to skateboard or whatever. Having spent so much time at the community parks, playing pickleball, for eight years or longer – signage, how do we incorporate that? I wanted to bring that back to the discussion, because most things I'm looking at, ice rinks are not apart of the equation. I'd like to ask Etobicoke about the dedicated courts, what happens in non permit times? And I'd like to ask Chris about the signage.

**A:** There was a lot said there, so lets just talk about what is happening at Centennial Park. There is going to be public time – how is that going to be managed. Chris has managed signage so far and he is open to looking at different ideas, I know we've sent him some. It's a work in progress and I think we're going to get there. My best example is I've played at confederation park in Hamilton. It's a twelve-court facility and it's been around since probably 2019. The first year it was crazy, lots of people coming and it was fully open. The second year, they made it so you had to book through the City of Hamilton. And then the third year, you actually had to be a resident of Hamilton to book courts. But then we would have someone from Hamilton book a court and we'd sort of just slide in with them. What we're trying to do, and what we've shared with the Councillor, we're hoping to land 50% access to eight of the twelve courts at Centennial and manage all our 1800 members through different programs. And yes, we do not play for thirty minutes, we use racks or paddles against the fence or chalk drawn boxes. We're hoping to manage our side, but we also want to help the City to understand how they can manage the craziness when everyone comes from all over to play at Centennial Park.

**R:** My experience with the courts is mostly throughout Etobicoke, and the usage has been fairly respectful overall. I have not heard a lot of conflict between the different user groups. We do recognize that when the pickleball courts are painted on tennis courts, you almost have to observe the thirty-minute rule. But again, I think a lot of times the pickleball play is sort of outside the norm of the tennis play as well. At least that's my experience. With any of our public facilities, we do ask people to be respectful of everybody else using the facility. Obviously, we try to create a way to allow different types of play to happen. The thirty-minute rule seems to work well in shared facilities.

The dedicated facilities, we do want to create the language for these signs and we have an opportunity to tweak that still. Whether that's rotational play or a term I heard last week – basket play. I assume it is something similar, but if there is language that you have and want to share with us and you believe it is better suited for the dedicated courts than I want to hear it. Anything we can do to fine tune our signs to make it actually usable on a dedicated court is a benefit to us all. It takes away that gray area and makes it something that is usable by the pickleball community. The ones where we do have those shared courts, we will be a little more structured in what we can say and what we have to do because we have to ensure that they are shared by all. I would invite you to share any suggestions or language with me that can be included in the sign. Please feel free to e-mail me and I will share that with our Standards and Innovation team. They are helping us create these signs and they can try to incorporate some of that language.

**C:** I think we should look into curling clubs. They are closed down for the summer and they close quite early and I'm wondering if those facilities are something that someone has looked into. I'm new to this, I just became part of the board for Leaside Pickleball Club, so I'm sorry if this has been tabled before, but it's just something that I wanted to bring up.

**R:** Thank you for that comment. Absolutely yes. The challenges that we have had with our curling clubs is, we're dealing with sand floors. They are not all smooth concrete floors, and if they are, they have physical wall barriers on it. They just weren't built for it. The other one that comes up, and arena's as well – same thing, they are indoor dry pads in the summer months. Some facilities are extremely challenging from a heating and air conditioning perspective. They are not comfortable to be in in the summer, they weren't insulated or built that way but, as part of our facilities plan, we are doing an ice strategy that's looking at maximizing year-round use. So, I just want to assure you that we are looking for every flat surface we can find. Ideally, ones that already exist and don't require more land and aren't being used are low hanging fruit in our perspective. So, we will make sure to get that noted today.

**C:** We have played at the Dixie Curling Club, but that is exactly right, it's about temperature. Ice goes out at the end of April and back in at the end of August or early September. It's a small window but it's what we're all trying to do, find places to play and we do fill up time slots for the curling club. We have some clubs and leagues going there which is fantastic. The surface is perfect, the space is good. We have five courts there, we leave our nets there, it's really nice to have everything there. So, it is dedicated for pickleball. When we start in April it is really cold and people are wearing lots because the ice has just gone out, and then by the end of June it's too hot and we are sweating. But I do also know that our model, some of our members started it at the high park curling club and they play right through August, even though they are dripping wet, and they enjoy it. I think they've smartened up and started handing out towels. It is a possibility, it's just a short window though. I have played in hockey rinks – the Canadian Nationals was in Kingston two years ago and it was played on a fourplex

hockey rink. It had maybe thirty courts, it was incredible. It was very hot though, it was in August. At Dixie, we got two big fans, one at each end, and they helped a little bit.

**C:** I want to come back to the mandate of parks in hockey rinks because that is where the mass of people are playing and the permits are at. So, the non permitted time, I wonder how we can maybe have a chat or work together on signage for the ice hockey rinks. Maybe I am wrong, but the mandate is to work to have these places for all sports, at least when I checked into getting a dedicated court at Ramsden, we were told arenas are for all sports. So, what I'm having a little bit of a tough time figuring out how to get signage for an ice hockey rink for pickleball. What can we work on because, again, a thirty-minute rule doesn't work. Is this something we should talk about together. In the west end, some of the hockey rinks have tennis courts that go up. You go to some of these places but they are hockey rinks that have nets up for tennis and they have lines for pickleball. We are talking about rinks that don't have any nets at all. Think about it, in four months 1400 people signed up, and yet we're to share with the community. I just want to understand how we're going to make this work as we go forward because dedicated courts aren't coming for a while.

**R:** We do have 21 outdoor courts in Etobicoke, or the west district. All of those are tennis and pickleball courts in the summer months, I'm not as well versed with what's downtown. You and I can connect offline. I can then bring that back to the manager in the south district because I think this is going to be a case-by-case sort of situation.

**C:** There are all these rinks that we play at that are not like Etobicoke. We don't have tennis courts on our dry pads in central and east Toronto. That is an area that should be looked at, if there is going to be signage or not.

**C:** I know everyone is being creative in look for places to play, arenas, curling clubs, etc. But at the end of the day those facilities were made to play other sports, not pickleball. They are interim, band-aid solutions for pickleball. Like if we were tennis people on a call, would we be talking about tennis at a curling club? These are all short-term ideas. These surfaces are not ideal for pickleball, they are slippery, they are dusty, they are made for other sports. We need to push the conversation beyond playing on these surfaces made for other sports.

### **Question 3: How else can we support different pickleball players?**

**Q:** If we designed programs specifically for children, would there be some subsidies we may be eligible for? Our club is in a church and the church has a private school, but the club operates in it. We're both non-profit. Would there be the possibility of subsidies for setting up programs specifically for children?

**A:** Not specifically through us. There are some grant streams that I can probably share with you that are around children and youth and access to sports, but not specifically through recreation. We can connect offline about that because there are lots of groups out there that are looking to support grassroots sports and community sport for children and youth.

**C:** I would just like to say that due to the nature of pickleball, because it is a community sport, most people do join some sort of group. Whether it's Sid's group or an association or whatever. It's not tennis where you just need to find one other person, you need to show up in a group and cycle on. Having said that, those of us that run non-profit associations and groups are at capacity. We don't have enough space or enough play to offer. More people would like to join, but we have cut off membership because we just can't take anybody else. I would say there is a fair split between time booked by community play groups and open court times where you can just show up and play. I'm counting on the city to maintain a pretty good balance of having enough open time for people to drop in and community groups to play. But I think the balance will be higher for community groups because of the nature of the sport.

## **Outstanding Issues for 2025 Slide**

### **What issues would you prioritize for discussion in 2025?**

**A:** The only discussion to have is how to get more courts. And I don't think it's that difficult. I see some tennis courts that are pushing up daisies. We could go out with a couple of cans of paint and have courts in a couple of days. I'm not familiar with city processes, but I don't know why it takes years to get courts. People are desperate for dedicated pickleball courts.

**A:** It's speed of delivery. How can we make this happen in 2025? We had a court put down at Eglinton Flats quickly, it's perfect, it's an awesome court inside a small piece of property outside the main courts. I haven't seen the one at Wellesley, so stuff is happening, but I want to double down on speed. We're going to send some words for what to say on signage for dedicated courts.

**A:** The City of Toronto did not have women's pickleball. I had, at Regent Park, got some space for women's only pickleball. I think it is important because you have different religions, where women find it a little bit harder to enter sport. It was an interesting experience, had it been a different time of day, it might have done differently. Next year, can we talk about creating indoor space for women's pickleball? The only thing that held back our programming was the time, 90 minutes is not enough time, it should be a minimum of two hours. Our program was over sold, we needed more time, but the fact is that it was 90 minutes of pure joy for the women there. Not all women are comfortable playing with men, regardless of culture. It wasn't formally approved by the City of Toronto, but it was a joy. People came up to me and asked when we can do it again. They felt more comfortable playing with other women. One of the detractors, though, was the time period it was in at Regent Park, it was an evening time where many of the women I was hoping to attract from other cultures were really tied up with their families at night. So, they would have babysitting issues or other issues, and they would say to me they would like to learn how to play but needed a different time when they are not watching their children at night. I'm just leaving this with you, there is an opportunity to expand the sport with women.

**R:** Yes, we can do that. There are some things at the facility level that we need to take into consideration. But in a lot of our new buildings, we're putting automated blinds so

we can hit a button, the blinds come down, and it becomes a gender specific space. We have a new community centre coming online mid 2025 and we're actually discussing exactly this. But not only how do we provide the programming, but how do we eliminate those barriers you just addressed around childcare or family commitments? We're kind of looking at it in a holistic way. What else do we need to do here to ensure women can participate successfully in this program and in a regular way? So, we've done that with some of our other gender specific programming, an example is women's shinny. We're up to almost 100 hours a week of women's shinny at outdoor ice rinks. It's been a journey, but we are getting there, and we have similar plans in place for other sports.

**Q:** Has the city looked at Sunnybrook and Downsview park for dedicated courts? I think Downsview is federal.

**R:** We are looking everywhere. I can let you know, you're totally right – Downsview is federal, they are actually undertaking a major process where they've done a request for proposals for all kinds of sports up there. So, there is a big move on at Downsview. We're keeping an eye on that. We do have long term plans at Downsview, but they are many years away through the newer Downsview development in the Allens east area. We look at our facilities plan anytime we are developing new parks, so that's why this five-year review is so important, to make sure that the needs are clear around pickleball, so they start getting incorporated into new parks. On Sunnybrook specifically, we have had a look at a number of different things, its quite sport field heavy at that location but its certainly something we can take another look at to see if there is a natural place for something like this to go. But even with Sunnybrook Park, there is not tons of flat land.

**Q:** It does seem like they have a lot of space on that upper area in Sunnybrook, but I guess whatever definition of large space can be is different for different people. I was going to ask when these facilities are built, or when there is dedicated space, will you be allowing clubs to permit those spaces, just like we permit outdoor spaces right now? Are clubs going to have access to these spaces, because obviously that's what we're all interested in. Is this a topic for discussion?

**R:** There is definitely work to be done. We have heard loud and clear that the ability to permit and have dedicated space on the courts is important. We have heard less about clubs, but we've also heard the balance needs to be there between permitted time and public use. Yes, there will be consideration of both going forward, and I think it's fair to say that Centennial Park will be our first major facility coming online and, in many ways, that'll be the precedent or test site where we have a good number of courts. It's a nice problem to have to figure out, how access will be on twelve courts. Certainly, better than two courts or four courts. So that will be work to be done from a policy perspective, and we did talk about this in one of the earlier meetings. We currently have a policy for tennis clubs within the City of Toronto, how clubs exist and that would be where you are looking at 100% access to a space and those clubs contribute to the court. I would say at this point we are not in the situation where we have hundreds of courts available to have a blend of public and club courts. I think that is something that will probably develop over time as we have more courts. We only have a small number of courts, and

one club is operating the only location, from the public perspective I think we know demand is citywide for these types of courts.

**A:** I also would bring up pickleball clubs for discussion in 2025. But you have explained that will be a down the road discussion, but lets not give up on it. I do believe in a club system. Also – you have the crossroads up at Don Mills and Eglinton, a huge development near the park system adjacent to it. We're going to have land available once the science centre is out. There's a huge population there, west of Victoria Park. Has any consideration been given to this area for pickleball courts?

**R:** The science centre lands are in a fairly complicated state. There is a lot of future development being considered for it. I would say broadly the land is on the City's radar for lots of needs, you know even beyond recreation. Park and parkland is where we start in those conversations. We do have a community centre planned for that area, near Wynford and Don Mills on the west side that will be going into construction soon. I don't believe planning has happened for the outdoor space yet, but we will consider all of our recommendations in our facility plans, including pickleball, given that there is enough land.

## **Approval of Minutes Slide:**

**Q:** Are the minutes posted online.

**A:** Yes, they are posted online, but not until they are approved by this group.

## **Next Steps**

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- The PAG members are encouraged to continue to provide any additional feedback via email to [pickleball@toronto.ca](mailto:pickleball@toronto.ca).
- The city staff will undertake an internal annual review of the Pickleball Advisory Group as per the terms of reference and prepare a year-end report
- The Pickleball Advisory Group members will be contacted in the new year to share next steps

## **Appendix A – Agenda**

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### **Pickleball Advisory Group Meeting 6**

Date: Wednesday, November 27, 2024

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

Location: Virtual Meeting (Webex)

7:00 p.m. Welcome and Introductions

7:05 p.m. Land and African Ancestral Acknowledgements

7:10 p.m. Year-end Recap

7:25 p.m. Supporting Pickleball Discussion

8:20 p.m. Outstanding Issues for 2025

8:40 p.m. Terms of Reference Review

8:45 p.m. Updates and Announcements

9:00 p.m. Adjourn