



Subject: Budget White Paper – Tennis and Pickleball Memberships

Report Number: RCP 23–01 Budget White Paper

Department: Recreation, Culture & Parks Department

Submitted by: Julie Columbus

Meeting Type: Council Meeting

Meeting Date: Monday, January 16, 2023

RECOMMENDATION

THAT report RCP 23-01 Tennis and Pickleball Memberships Budget White Paper be received as information;

AND THAT staff use the information collected to guide future options for the operation of the tennis courts and any other future sports courts and amenities.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this report is to present Council with the findings of the research around constraints and advantages of membership only access to tennis courts and pickleball courts, and reviewing fee options.

During the Budget meeting on Wednesday, December 7th Council asked staff to research options on tennis and pickleball court memberships, providing the advantages and disadvantages of memberships, fees, etc.

DISCUSSION

Attached is the list of local municipalities and information regarding community access to the courts. The municipalities consulted include St Thomas, Ingersoll, Cambridge, Norwich, Zorra, London and Woodstock. None of the municipalities offered membership based operations of their tennis or pickle ball courts.

The finding show that all municipalities but one, provide free access to courts based on first-come first-served. Cambridge was the only municipality that charges a fee for use. The Pickleball and Tennis courts in Cambridge can be rented for \$18.26 per use (2 hours).

The Town of Tecumseh recently erected a 10 court Pickleball facility at a cost of \$725,000. The Tecumseh Pickleball Courts are open for members only. Individuals may purchase a seasonal Recreational Membership through the Community and Recreation Services Department. The Tecumseh Pickleball Courts season is April to November, when nets are installed and the fence lock is functional. Once nets are removed, the courts are closed for the season.

Individuals may purchase a Recreational Pickleball Seasonal Membership for \$27.00 plus tax beginning the first Monday of April. Keys are made available for pick-up during office hours to allow members access. Members will receive a key that allows the member (+ 1 guest opponent) access to the courts.

MEMBERSHIP OPTION:

It is recommended that staff work with local enthusiasts of tennis or Pickleball to educate them on the benefits of creating a local association. An example is the creation of the “Tillsonburg Pickleball Association” under the umbrella of the Ontario Pickleball Association. This membership would provide the local organization support, resources, tournament information and access to member insurance. It would rely on local volunteers to coordinate the membership model. It should be noted that relying on volunteers could provide challenges as the community volunteerism is decreasing province-wide and may not be sustainable for an extended period of time.

The coordination of a Tillsonburg Pickleball Association would also provide an opportunity to formally book courts to create a reservation system on certain days and times. Staff would create a rental fee as part of the RCP rates and fees bylaw. This would ensure exclusive access while generating revenue to support maintenance and asset management expenses.

KEY DEPOSIT OPTION:

Another option is to implement a “key deposit” system. This would be coordinated annually for court users. It would require a deposit fee for each resident to purchase a key at the beginning of each season, which is refunded at the end of the season when the key is returned. However, this process requires many administrative hours to coordinate as well as the challenge of sharing keys and duplicated keys out in the community.

CONSULTATION

This report has been prepared in consultation with the Facilities Booking Coordinator and the Recreation, Culture & Parks Director.

FINANCIAL IMPACT/FUNDING SOURCE

Financial implications would vary depending on fees established for rentals or key deposits should the decision be made to move to a more formal membership system to access the courts in Tillsonburg. All revenue would assist in offsetting operational expense and funding future asset management expenses.

CORPORATE GOALS

How does this report support the corporate goals identified in the Community Strategic Plan?

- ☒ Lifestyle and amenities
- ☐ Customer service, communication and engagement
- ☐ Business attraction, retention and expansion
- ☐ Community growth
- ☐ Connectivity and transportation
- ☐ Not Applicable

Does this report relate to a specific strategic direction or project identified in the Community Strategic Plan? Please indicate section number and/or any priority projects identified in the plan.

Goal – Tillsonburg will strive to offer residents the amenities, services and attractions they require to enjoy balanced lifestyles.

Strategic Direction – Update municipal sports facilities consistent with modern standards.

Priority Project – N/A

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A – Summary list of local municipalities including court inventory and fees or operational notes.