



**Subject: Tillsonburg Pickleball Club Request**

**Report Number:** RCP 25-023

Department: Recreation, Culture and Parks Department

Submitted by: Julie Dawley, Manager of Recreation Programs & Services

Meeting Type: Council Meeting

Meeting Date: Monday, April 28, 2025

**RECOMMENDATION**

- A. THAT report RCP 25-023 titled Tillsonburg Pickleball Club be received as information; and
- B. THAT Council approves the following recommendations:
  - a. That the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club be granted dedicated court time as outlined in this staff report; and
  - b. That the dedicated use be subject to an hourly rental fee of \$4.00 per pickleball court per hour in accordance with the Town's established facility rental terms and conditions; and
  - c. That the \$4.00 per pickleball court per hour fee be added to the 2025 Rates and Fees By Law, to take effect July 1, 2025; and
  - d. That court signage remain generic in nature to support and encourage general community use.

**BACKGROUND**

On March 6, 2025, two representatives from the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club presented to the Recreation and Sports Advisory Committee a very thorough report (Appendix A) regarding the club's accomplishments and predictions for continued growth. They included the following recommendations to assist with the challenges of supporting this growth:

- Insert pickleball lines on the existing tennis courts.
- Exclusive play time Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. as well as 2 – 3 evenings per week.

Following this presentation the committee tabled the following resolution:

***Moved By:*** Scott Vitas

***Seconded By:*** Kristy Milmine

*THAT the staff bring a comprehensive report on court usage to the next committee meeting with a recommendation on moving forward.*

On April 3, 2025, a presentation from tennis users in the community was presented to the Recreation and Sports Advisory Committee regarding their opposition to adding pickleball lines to existing tennis courts (Appendix B). This presentation reaffirmed the committee's decision to recommend that additional court lines not be implemented in order to maintain a facility layout that supports the satisfaction and needs of both user groups.

An area review of pickleball user fees and private club usage was reviewed and the following resolution was put forward:

**Moved By:** *Susie Wray*

**Seconded By:** *Andrew Gradish*

*THAT the Recreation & Sports Advisory Committee recommend that Council implement dedicated pickleball club rates for use of pickleball courts to ensure access for the pickleball club and general public use; and*

*THAT there are no pickleball lines added to the tennis courts for the 2025 season.*

***Carried***

At the April 14, 2025 Council meeting, the club President and one member had a delegation to Council and presented the presentation provided at the Recreation and Sports Advisory Committee. The requests to assist with the challenges of growth were slightly changed by the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club to the following:

- No addition of pickleball lines on existing tennis courts at this time.
- Exclusive play times Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 2 – 3 evenings per week at no cost to the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club
- Signage posted at the Pickleball Courts including pickleball play rules, paddle organization and etiquette.

## **DISCUSSION**

Pickleball has been a welcomed addition to the recreation department with program registrations full for all of the indoor play opportunities and a 2024 seasonal attendance of 2247 players on the outdoor courts.

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Recreation staff recognize the need to support the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club just as other sport organizations are supported in Tillsonburg. Providing a space where they can continue to grow while ensuring the Town has available facilities for those not looking for organized play.

While investigating neighbouring municipalities' pickleball opportunities as comparator information it became clear that most clubs are seeking and securing exclusive play times in their municipality.

Staff recommend, based on feedback from the Recreation and Sports Advisory Committee and neighbouring municipalities, providing exclusive time on two of the outdoor courts on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.; with a rental fee of \$4.00 per court per hour. This would provide the club with a total of 18 exclusive hours per week. This provides a balance of club time with community time on the courts and allows for one court to be dedicated to community use. The fee would account for the club having exclusive use of space, much like other organized groups pay for facility use.

The attached area review (Appendix C) presented at the April 3, 2025 Recreation & Sports Advisory Committee meeting outlines fees presently being charged in our area for exclusive club pickleball play. Based on this information the \$4.00 fee is a fair starting point for the 2025 outdoor season.

The request from the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club for signage that includes pickleball etiquette and rules is specific to organized or competitive play. This may not be applicable to casual or general community use. The recreational nature of community participation often involves players from a variety of skill levels and familiarity with pickleball. Posting sport specific rules may create confusion about how the courts may be used by community members. Staff recommend that the rules remain general and that the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club can provide the specific etiquette and rules pertaining to club play during their dedicated court times.

Once the schedule is confirmed it will be posted with general rules of play at the pickleball courts.

### **CONSULTATION**

Recreation & Sports Advisory Committee, RCP Recreation staff, RCP Director, RCP Manager of Parks and Facilities, Review of neighbouring municipalities; Norfolk County, St. Thomas, Aylmer, Ingersoll and Woodstock.

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The Tillsonburg Pickleball Club reviewed the minutes from the Recreation and Sport Advisory Committee and expressed they are concerned with the prospects of paying for exclusive use of the pickleball courts. It is important to note that all clubs and sporting organizations, including Baseball, Hockey, Swimming, Figure Skating, Ringette, Ball Hockey, are subject to facility rental fees for exclusive use of Town facilities.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT/FUNDING SOURCE**

Based on the proposed schedule of dedicated court times, the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club would incur a rental fee of \$8.00 per hour for two courts, resulting in a total weekly commitment of \$144.00 for 18 hours of exclusive use.

To align with other departmental updates and limit by-law amendments, the fee will be incorporated into the Rates and Fees By-law at the second Council meeting in May 2025, with implementation effective July 1, 2025.

This approach would allow the Tillsonburg Pickleball Club to utilize the dedicated court times free of charge until June 30, 2025, which may support the club's transition to the new rental model by providing an initial no-cost period. Starting July 1, 2025, the fee would be applied in accordance with the amended Rates and Fees By-law.

### **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** – Within the community, Tillsonburg will strive to offer residents the amenities, services and attractions they require to enjoy balanced lifestyles.

**Strategic Direction** – Increase opportunities to enjoy culture, events and leisure activities in Tillsonburg; Maintain and enhance programs and facilities to support

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an active, engaged senior population; Maintain and enhance programs and facilities to support an active, engaged youth population

**Priority Project** – N/A

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A – Tillsonburg Pickleball Club Presentation

Appendix B – Tillsonburg Tennis Users Presentation

Appendix C – Area Pickleball Follow Up Memo RSAC April 3, 2025