

City of Montgomery
Parks and Recreation Committee Minutes
November 13, 2023

Staff Present

Brian Riblet, City Manager
Tracy Henao, Asst. City Manager
John Crowell, Police Chief
Gary Heitkamp, Public Works Director
Mike Rogers, Asst. Public Works Director
Terry Donnellon, Law Director
Connie Gaylor, Clerk of Council

Committee Members Present

Sasha Naiman, Chair
Mike Cappel
Chris Dobrozsi

The Parks and Recreation Committee of Council convened its meeting for November 13, 2023 at 3:30 p.m. with Mrs. Naiman presiding.

New Business

Pickleball Discussion

Mr. Riblet provided background on the installation of pickleball courts and the meetings that have occurred since the popularity of the sport has grown. He stated that installing the courts at Dulle Park has created unintended consequences regarding noise. He explained that since the 2020 installation of the courts the noise complaints have prompted discussions on how to best address the concerns of neighbors near the Dulle Park courts specifically. These discussions have been at Parks and Recreation Commission and Parks and Recreation Committee public meetings. Staff has researched the cost of installing acoustifence to contain the sound and found it to be fairly expensive with no guarantee that it will reduce the noise levels to the surrounding neighbors. Mr. Riblet explained that at the March 13 Committee meeting a motion was made by the Committee to restrict the hours of play from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at both Dulle and Swaim parks. As a result of this decision staff began to hear from residents asking to reverse the hours. At the June Committee meeting, the Committee decided to retain the restricted hours while staff researched the cost of moving the pickleball courts to Weller Park. He stated that outside of the complaints from neighboring residents near Dulle Park staff were now hearing from residents near Swaim Park with the same noise complaints. He stated there were also issues with parking at Dulle when there were paid rentals of Terwilliger Lodge. Mr. Riblet read comments submitted by individuals who had negative encounters with pickleball players at Dulle who felt intimidated to leave the courts. He stated that a new player was told to play in Loveland where the play was less intense.

Mr. Riblet explained that funding was included on the 2024 Operating Budget to create three pickleball courts at Weller Park to replace the existing courts. He stated there was potential for grant funding that staff were preparing to apply for by Friday, November 17. He stated that if awarded the grant, the funding would allow staff to pursue a larger opportunity for expansion of pickleball at Weller Park. He stated that, if awarded, he estimated the funding would not be available until July of 2024 from ODOT (Ohio Department of Transportation). He explained to those in attendance to not expect new courts by the beginning of the season next year.

Mr. Riblet explained that while Weller is the best fit for the relocation of the pickleball courts that it would come with the cost of elimination of a basketball or volleyball court as well as a potential

need for additional parking. He stated that conversations could be conducted with Good Shepherd Church to propose shared parking but that could not be counted on as a definite solution to parking.

Mrs. Naiman thanked Mr. Riblet for all the information shared and opened the floor to those in attendance.

Guests and Residents

Colleen Neal, 8001 Monte Drive-Ms. Neal explained to the Committee and staff that she has lived behind Swaim Park since 2015. She stated that the noise has become a nuisance since the addition of pickleball on the tennis courts. She explained that she personally measured the noise, and it consistently violated the Noise Ordinance of registering over 80 decibels, which she said is ten times what is allowed. She stated she could hear the noise with her windows and doors closed. She stated that she hears the noise from pickleball from sun-up to sun-down. She stated she felt her property values had dropped 20% due to pickleball. She explained that she measured the noise at her property line, which is 55 feet from the court and from her neighbor's property which is 50 feet. She asked the Committee to consider moving the courts to Weller Park and to restore the surface to tennis courts at Swaim Park.

Mr. Cappel asked Ms. Neal how she measured the noise.

Ms. Neal replied she used an app on her phone.

Steve Hardings, 7879 Symphony Lane-Mr. Hardings explained that he had attended multiple meetings and had several conversations as well as a meeting with Mr. Riblet. He stated that he went the entire spring and summer without opening his windows. He thanked Mr. Riblet for always being very transparent about the process. He stated that he felt the only solution was to move the courts to Weller Park and to remove the courts from Dulle.

Mary Jo Byrnes, 7980 Schoolhouse Lane-Ms. Byrnes stated to the Committee that she never foresaw these kind of issues when the pickleball courts were installed. She stated that the sport has exploded. She explained that work was being done to create sound deafening material for the paddles and balls. She stated that the soundproofing materials for the fencing would not work. She stated that even moving forward with moving courts to Weller, she felt there would never be enough courts for the demand to use them. She stated that applying for additional funding to convert the courts to Weller was a great idea. She stated that she felt courts should still be open at Swaim and Dulle. She also added that Symmes Township had added courts at the park on Hopewell Road that people could use. She suggested a partnership with Twin Lakes to install courts on their property.

Mrs. Naiman stated that as long as there were courts in Swaim and Dulle parks there would still be issues. Mrs. Naiman asked how confident staff were moving courts to Weller will solve the current issues.

Mr. Riblet stated that there would still be the pressing issue of parking at Weller Park.

Mr. Heitkamp displayed an aerial view of Weller Park and stated that six courts could be installed by reorienting the existing court and also using the existing basketball court. He explained that

by doing that, as Mr. Riblet stated, we would have to lose a basketball court and add parking. He stated that converting the existing tennis courts at Weller would not be an option as they are also too close to homes.

Mr. Riblet reiterated that moving to Weller Park would mean removing pickleball from Dulle and Swaim parks.

Mr. Cappel asked if one of the tennis courts at Weller could be converted to basketball.

Mr. Heitkamp said that could be a consideration.

Ms. Byrnes stated that Madeira's pickleball courts would be open the Spring of 2024. She stated that she felt the demand at Swaim Park was due to Madeira's courts being closed.

Mrs. Naiman asked if Good Shepherd were amenable to sharing parking, was there a walkway directly to the pickleball courts or would the City need to install one.

Mr. Heitkamp illustrated on the aerial map where adjoining pathways were. He explained that there was not a pathway directly to the courts and there was a detention basin located near the area that would have to be taken into consideration when planning a pathway.

Ms. Byrnes added that for consideration in the planning of courts that the courts in Cincinnati at Smale Park had fencing that separated the individual courts which helps with the balls not rolling into other courts.

Mr. Dobrozsi stated that he was in favor of moving the courts to Weller Park for as many as we were able to fund.

Mr. Harding asked for confirmation that the plan was to eliminate courts at Swaim and Dulle.

Mrs. Naiman replied that this discussion was the study of that change.

Mr. Riblet stated that if the Committee advises to move forward with relocating the courts to Weller that he recommends restriping the courts at Swaim and Dulle for tennis only and to post signs prohibiting pickleball.

Mr. Cappel made a motion to grant staff the authority to pursue funding with a minimum of three courts at Weller with the flexibility to add more courts and to analyze parking after the grant funding is decided. Mr. Dobrozsi seconded. The Committee unanimously agreed.

Minutes

Mr. Cappel moved to approve the minutes from the June 12, 2023 Parks and Recreation meeting. Mr. Dobrozsi seconded. The Committee unanimously agreed.

Other Business

There was no other business

Adjournment

Mr. Cappel moved for adjournment. Mrs. Naiman seconded. The Committee unanimously agreed. The meeting adjourned at 4:16 p.m.


Chair