

City of Montgomery
Parks and Recreation Committee Minutes
July 15, 2024

Staff Present

Brian Riblet, City Manager
Tracy Henao-Asst. City Manager
Terry Donnellon, Law Director
John Crowell-Police Chief
Greg Vonden Benken, Asst. Police Chief
Connie Gaylor, Clerk of Council

Committee Members Present

Catherine Mills-Reynolds, Chair
Sasha Naiman
Craig Margolis

Guests

Jorge Tameron, Parks & Recreation Commission Chair
Jody Lowe, Parks & Recreation Commission Member

The Parks and Recreation Committee of Council convened its meeting for July 15, 2024 at 3:30 p.m. with Mrs. Mills-Reynolds presiding.

New Business

Pickleball Discussion

Mrs. Mills-Reynolds explained to those in attendance that the discussion around pickleball was to address recent concerns from residents regarding the hours of play at Swaim Park. She asked Mr. Riblet to provide an update of the construction of courts.

Mr. Riblet explained that since the conversion of tennis courts to pickleball there have been several meetings at the Parks and Recreation Committee level to address concerns over noise from neighboring property owners. He stated that as a result of these discussions restriction of hours was decided by the Committee in 2023. He explained that City Council approved funding in the 2024 budget with the intent of constructing six courts at Weller Park as an alternative site to Swaim and Dulle Parks. He stated that staff has not deviated from that approach. Mr. Riblet explained that it is anticipated that legislation will come before City Council at the July 24 Work Session to propose an agreement to construct the courts. He added that, if approved, the courts could be completed prior to the end of this year.

Mr. Margolis stated that the orientation of the courts is critical as it is not desirable at its current location, facing the sun.

Mr. Riblet explained that the anticipated design will be to reorient the courts and to include windscreens on six foot tall fencing around the courts.

Mary Jo Byrnes, 7980 Schoolhouse Lane- Mr. Byrnes asked if alternative meant not additional courts.

Mr. Riblet replied that it was the intent that the courts would replace the existing courts at Swaim and Dulle Parks, but he would defer to the Committee to confirm that.

David Bellos, 10623 Deerfield Road-Mr. Bellos asked if best ideas from the players were considered when the design was created for the courts.

Mr. Riblet replied that staff worked with a company specializing in the design of pickleball courts and not a general contractor. He stated that the design would be top-notch.

Mr. Bellos stated that having a canopy for the players waiting to play would be nice.

Mr. Riblet stated that the design includes a respite area with picnic tables and a sunshade.

John Beers, 8141 Traverse Court-Mr. Beers asked how the new courts would affect the courts at Dulle Park.

Mr. Riblet replied that consistent with prior conversations the intent is to convert the courts at Dulle Park back to tennis.

Mr. Beers stated that pickleball is the fastest growing sport right now.

Mrs. Naiman explained that the conversation for the last two years has been centered around people being for and against pickleball. She stated that Council approved funding to construct courts at Weller Park with consideration of removing the courts at Swaim and Dulle Parks. She explained that she understands the conflict of keeping and removing the courts. She stated that the Committee and staff are striving to be consistent with best practices to move the courts away from residences, which would mean returning Swaim and Dulle courts back to tennis.

Ron Hoying, 10495 Deerfield Road-Mr. Hoying explained that he hears 8-10 hours of pickleball noise a day and it will drive you crazy. He stated that when the players hold Round-Robin tournaments there are normally 20-30 people there waiting to play. He stated this goes on from 8 to 12 hours on the weekends. He stated that people from all areas come as a single to get into a game. He explained that he went with his grandkids but could not play as he did not want to place them on a list to be worked in with the older players due to their young age. He explained there were never openings to get a court as Dulle has become the destination. He stated he feels this knocks residents out of being able to get a court for their family. He explained that in Blue Ash you have to be a resident to use the courts and feels there needs to be a regulation like that for Montgomery courts or charge for the use by non-residents.

Mr. Bellos explained that where there is a large number of players, the rule is four on and then four off. He stated that the quality of play has gone down. He stated that other public courts have a lot of resident and non-residents. He added that when people come to play in Montgomery it produces business for the local restaurants. He explained that the morning hours are more crowded than the evening. He feels that with all the new courts opening that the number of people playing at Dulle will gradually begin to decrease.

Colleen Neal and David Rothgeb, 8001 Monte-Ms. Neal explained that her home backs up to Swaim Park and that pickleball has produced an incessant nuisance of noise. She stated it goes from the time the courts open to the time they close. She stated that the noise is louder than ever and violates the noise ordinance. She explained that she cannot open her windows or doors. She

stated that the homes near the courts are unlivable during pickleball season. She asked if there was a plan to restripe Swaim Courts. She asked if that was still the intent.

Mrs. Naiman replied that the consistent plan is to move the courts to Weller Park, but nothing is etched in stone.

Ms. Neal stated that if all the courts are kept, there will never be enough, and it will not address the issue. She asked what was enough and asked to have her sanity and life back.

Lindi Vernick, 8255 Monte-Ms. Vernick stated that her opinion was different in that she was thankful for the courts at Swaim and Dulle. She stated that as a working mom, having courts near her home made a big difference. She stated that if she has to drive to Weller Park, it will prevent her from playing. She asked if there are other possibilities for courts. She asked about Pfeiffer Park. She stated that Weller Park is a great addition but not as a substitute. She stated the hours are a detriment as a busy parent and asked if they could be extended to 9:00 p.m.

Mrs. Naiman asked Ms. Vernick if her challenge is the time restriction.

Ms. Vernick replied that it wouldn't be worth her time to drive to Weller to play for 30 minutes.

Mr. Riblet explained that if the courts were constructed at Weller Park, where they would be much further from homes, the hours wouldn't need to be restricted. He stated that at this time he could not guarantee that, but that is the thought.

Ms. Vernick replied that no restrictions would be nice if there were lights and that she appreciates that consideration. She added that Blue Ash has open play for non-residents; however, non-residents could not reserve a court.

Ms. Byrnes stated that in response to other comments, that people are allowed to play and have their own courts. She stated that the better players are not interested in playing with newbies. She explained that Dulle was organized as open play from the beginning. She stated that Swaim park is not set up in an app or group. She stated that if she is at the courts and someone wants to use a court, the players will accommodate. She stated there is a one hour limit and this has always been the case.

Mr. Hoying stated that this has not been his experience. He has been told he has to wait an hour to get on a court.

Laura Hoying, 8019 Monte-Ms. Hoying stated that she appreciates the ability to have courts for physical health and exercise, however she agrees that the noise is incessant all day, every day. She explained that she is appreciative of the restricted hours as she would be awakened at 6:30 a.m. before the restriction by players playing and yelling. She stated that moving the courts was a great suggestion. She explained that the tennis courts were not planned to be pickleball whereas Weller will be a planned court. She stated that there should be a master plan for future courts, such as Pfeiffer Park.

Jorge Tameron, 7838 Shadowhill Way-Mr. Tameron explained that the Parks and Recreation Commission conducted a survey of residents in the past and asked if it was time to do that again.

Ms. Neal stated that there were a lot more non-residents using the courts than residents that live in proximity of the courts so she felt a survey would be skewed.

Ms. Vernick asked if consideration of making the hours longer a couple of nights a week.

Mr. Rothgeb stated that he agrees with most of the comments made. He stated the issue is about the nearest neighbors. He stated that courts at Swaim are 55 feet from his yard, 100 feet from his house. He stated that he is thankful for the police assistance in closing the courts so he could enjoy one to two hours of time in his yard. He stated that the pickleball players will not voluntarily leave. He stated if the baseball diamond at Swaim could be converted to pickleball courts that may be a solution.

Mr. Bellos stated that at one time Dulle was a destination but not anymore. He stated the hours were a good move and he lives next to the courts. He stated restricting access all together is not a good suggestion.

Mr. Hoying stated that the issue at Dulle was that it was built to be two tennis courts and now there are 16 people at a time on the courts. He is in favor of returning the courts to tennis courts. He stated while it was convenient to play on a divided court, it was not intended for the number of people who are there to play.

Ms. Byrnes asked what precipitated placing the sign that stated possible arrest if the hours are not followed.

Chief Crowell explained that people violate the hours and even have tried to jimmy the lock to gain access to the courts.

Mrs. Naiman explained that rather than arrest people who did not adhere to the rules, signs were placed to warn of the consequences of violating the hour restrictions.

Chief Crowell stated that the signs were put up at his request as people were not adhering to the rules and would want to argue with the officers who were there to lock the courts.

Mrs. Mills-Reynolds stated that she realizes there are strong feelings on both sides of this issue. She stated that the Committee wants to provide an opportunity for residents to use the parks but also to provide a quality of life to the property owners who are near the parks. She explained that the hours were determined by feedback of people who attended meetings or contacted City Hall and Council members. She stated that the next step would be to have legislation presented to City Council. She explained that during this time the initial restrictions and intent to move the courts to Weller were still in place. She stated that she felt that people have the best interests of their neighbors at heart. She stated that looking for other areas for pickleball was a good idea.

Mrs. Naiman provided a recap of what she heard from the meeting. She explained it was to consider staggered days of play with no hour restrictions at Swaim and Dulle; keep future locations in mind; and consider rewording the signs at both parks to have a softer touch. She stated that it is very clear that the regular sound of pickleball is a real impediment to the homeowner. She asked if there was still an avenue to obtain feedback.

Mr. Margolis stated that part of the core values of the City was to encourage people to get out, exercise, and visit with neighbors. He stated that it is Council's goal to engage with residents to solve problems. He explained the challenge is considering what the majority wants and what the minority has to deal with. He stated he is concerned about existing homeowners who bought intentionally to be by a park or to be in Montgomery that these issues now affect. He stated it is a balance for both. Overall, he feels it will work out.

Mrs. Mills-Reynolds thanked those in attendance for their comments. She stated that the Committee will share their feedback at the next council meeting.

Minutes

Mrs. Naiman moved to approve the minutes from April 15 and April 18, 2024. Mr. Margolis seconded. The Committee unanimously agreed.

Other Business

There was no other business for discussion.

Adjournment

Mr. Margolis moved for adjournment. Mrs. Naiman seconded. The Committee unanimously agreed. The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.


Chair