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City of White Rock

Eric Stepura, Director of Recreation and Culture

Dear Eric,

I am writing you as the President of White Rock Tennis Club on behalf of our members and as well on behalf of the many other Tennis players who live in White Rock. As you know our club has approximately 250 members, plus a wait list. Our courts and the nearby Centennial Park tennis courts are busy with players nearly all the time.

We know that Pickleball has exploded in popularity in recent years. It is a great pastime, both sport and social. Many people play both Tennis and Pickleball, and we at the Tennis Club were happy when we heard that the City was proposing to use some of the available Community Amenity funds to make new courts to support the growth of Pickleball. We were disappointed when those plans were shelved recently, and we know it is going to be difficult to find sufficient space in the City to create the court space they desire. It may be that the new courts a few blocks away in South Surrey provide the court space required for the area with just casual play at Centennial as we have had for several years. In our view that should be considered.

It is clear to us that facilities built for Tennis in the 70's, when White Rock was smaller and had fewer tennis players, should not be cannibalized to try to accommodate Pickleball at the expense of the sport they were built for—Tennis.

The growth in Pickleball has not taken away from the popularity of Tennis, at least not in Canada. Tennis is also growing. While there are many who enjoy the sport as part of an active retirement lifestyle, like Pickleball, Tennis is a sport enjoyed by all age groups with the largest increases in participation coming in youth and young adults. This

attraction is at least partly due to the amazing success of Canadians at the highest levels of both men's and women's tennis. The current Canadian superstars are just barely out of their teens and so we can expect a decade or more of sterling results on the international scene. Just as exciting is the pipeline of junior players coming up behind them, including right here in BC, and White Rock. We often see families using the enclosed courts to start their youngsters in this affordable, enjoyable, lifelong sport. All it takes is just a racket and either family or friends to play with, or the trusty backboard on the wall of the court and of course the court.

Tennis is a truly international sport and many of White Rock's newest residents come with impressive tennis skills or some tennis knowledge and a desire to play and make new friends.

There has been no increase in the court facilities available for Tennis in decades despite the growth in population and the growth in the sport.

So, the challenge is that the courts built for Tennis are still in active use for that sport and now there is a new sport looking for a home too.

The social nature of Pickleball typically means the players congregate together at specified times, whereas Tennis is played in two or fours throughout the day or evening as conditions allow. We understand that the idea of lights on the courts would allow for more overall hours of court availability so that tennis players can enjoy the courts after the Pickleball players have packed up their nets and gone home.

We find this idea to be an appealing way to "stretch" the existing facilities. We recognize that there may be challenges in considering this option but think it has real merit for the City to consider to provide the sports and recreation facilities that are valued by residents. We strongly oppose the idea to convert any courts to exclusively Pickleball since that will result in unutilized court(s) much of the time. The goal must be to expand available play, not contract it.

We understand that there will be many challenges and are prepared to try to help.

Yours very truly,

George Whitfield

President White Rock Tennis Club