

White Rock Pickleball Community Message to Council Regarding Tennis

June 13, 2021

It has never been our intention to seek conflict with tennis, and in fact we have gone to great lengths to be respectful and focus on our sport. However, based on the letter submitted by the President of White Rock Tennis Club (WRTC) as item 9.1.f, under correspondence, we have no option but to address both points in his letter as well as other issues with respect to tennis.

We believe much mischievous and misleading information has been provided to Council regarding local tennis, so it is important to get the facts straight.

1. White Rock has 3 private tennis courts at the White Rock Tennis Club and 5 public tennis courts at Centennial Park. There are presently no permanent designated pickleball only courts in White Rock. Much like the horse and buggy had to make way for the automobile, a time comes when the need for change must be recognized and accommodated.
2. The President of WRTC has the authority to speak on behalf of its private members, and is entitled to his opinions, but he has no authority to assume any representation regarding the five public tennis courts at Centennial Park.
3. George Whitfield, the tennis coach (and President of WRTC), uses the Centennial Park public tennis courts for his private lessons. In this respect, his letter is personally motivated, self-serving and in clear conflict of interest. The WRTC does not allow private tennis lessons.
4. The users of the Centennial Park tennis courts are the general public and several tennis coaches providing private lessons. There is no organized tennis group similar to the White Rock Pickleball Community, amongst the tennis players at the Centennial Park public courts.
5. Quoted from an e-mail of a former WRTC member "...the WRTC uses one court at Centennial for their Spring and Summer league play; the tennis tournament that WRTC plays is a closed tournament for WRTC members only and is always played during the final two weeks in August and completed on Labour Day weekend. The five courts at Centennial are rarely if at all used to support this tournament. As a matter of fact, it is a Club preference that all matches are played at the Club's facility and one of the reasons the tournament is spread over the lengthy period." In other words, the members of the WRTC play tennis at their private club and not the Centennial Park tennis courts.

6. We appreciate comments in the letter "...that Pickleball has exploded in popularity in recent years. It is a great pastime, both sport and social."
7. It is unfortunate the President of WRTC decided to make a win/lose argument suggesting pickleball should not "cannibalize" tennis, because clearly there is space for both. WRTC players play at their private club and rarely, if ever, use public courts. Surely, providing the space of four tennis courts for tennis, and only one tennis court for pickleball at Centennial Park is reasonable knowing the dynamics of the two sports in our community.
8. Our information is the WRTC has less than 250 members, and its membership growth has been stagnant for many years.
9. Pickleball is now part of the physical education curriculum at area schools and members of the White Rock Pickleball Community have volunteered their expertise with coaching. Ideally, these young pickleball players need a place to play.
10. White Rock Pickleball Community recently raised funds and gathered donations for flowers and treats for all floors at the Evergreen Care Home on Oxford Street. We encourage our players to support local businesses in White Rock and have been known to gather our members for post game get togethers at 3 Dogs Brewery, Fishin' Chips on Johnston, Wooden Spoon restaurant, etc. We are actively committed to our local community.
11. A core group of our volunteers ensures all is in good order the with the pickleball courts including portable net repairs, regular supply of new balls, emailing regular updates, community newsletters and maintaining social media sites.
12. Our proposal is consistent with the CWR Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and the demographics of White Rock clearly support pickleball.
13. The difficult question, previously asked, is about the actual number of White Rock residents that play pickleball. Unfortunately, we don't have the answer, but do know this number is growing fast... The key point is if Council wishes to consider this as a factor, then the same must be asked of tennis. How many people using the tennis courts at Centennial Park are in fact White Rock residents?
14. An urban legend exists about the financial support provided by tennis players for the construction of the tennis courts. The facts are land was donated by Edith Webster many years ago. Quite likely, private funding was provided to support the initial construction of the WRTC. However, there is no substantive information the public tennis courts at Centennial Park received any funding from tennis players.

In conclusion, the decision for Council is not to make a choice between two sports. Rather, our request is for a fair and equitable decision in the best interest for people in our overall community.