

Pickleball Association of San Diego

A 503(c)(3) non-profit

2930 Barnard Street

San Diego, CA 92110

January 17, 2023

Andy Field
Director
Parks and Recreation Department
City of San Diego

Dear Mr. Field,

Thank you for organizing the opportunity to meet last week with your department, the mayor's office, and tennis folks. It was a worthwhile opportunity for the Pickleball Association of San Diego to continue our dialog with decision makers and interested parties. Each of us share in the goal of seeing all San Diegans pursue lifetime sports. It was heartening to hear that all groups understand that pickleball needs its own facility.

I'm writing this letter to memorialize where the Pickleball Association of San Diego (PASD) stands right now in its continued efforts with the City to bring a pickleball facility to the thousands of players who live within the city of San Diego.

1. The Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) will not consider an alternative SUP for Peninsula Tennis Club (PTC). You explained that renewal of the SUP is a "perfunctory exercise"; there will be no competitive process. PRD completed its investigation of PTC, found "accounting flaws", and told PTC that it must comply with the rules of the SUP. You told us that PRD believes PTC operates its club in a manner that continues to be in the best interests of the "general public" per the SUP.
2. Specifically, PASD's applications for a SUP for the courts now occupied by PTC will not be evaluated by PRD.
3. Based upon #1 and #2 above, PASD verified with you that it no longer needs to meet with nor seek votes of support from the Robb Field Community Recreation Group (RCRG) or the City's own Parks and Recreation Board.

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4. You told PASD that it should participate in the upcoming public planning sessions for the improvement of all the Robb Field athletic complex beginning in March. Specifically, PASD is invited to share its ideas for a pickleball complex at Robb, including its design, funding, and management plans.
5. During the discussion of a pickleball facility at Robb Field, Mr. Sprague of PTC represented that PTC had an unnamed funding source for a pickleball complex at Robb Field, too. You assured PASD that there would be a fair and open process for deciding among groups interested in funding and/or running a pickleball complex at Robb Field. A request for proposal (RFP) could be the mechanism. (No other procedures were discussed at this meeting.)
6. PASD officially requested that six of the twelve courts located at PTC be converted to pickleball courts now as a temporary measure until the completion of a pickleball complex at Robb Field. PASD would create and manage the temporary courts.
7. You accepted PASD's request and said it would be considered by the Parks and Recreation Department and the Mayor's office. You further stated that if six PTC courts were converted to pickleball temporarily there were four ways the courts could be managed: (1) by PTC; (2) on a first come/first served basis (i.e., not "managed"); (3) by city staff; or (4) by PASD.

Please let me know if any of the above items are inaccurate. As a newcomer to this project, I hope not only to keep the free discussion and negotiation flowing, but to help keep our group and others on the same page and working together with the same information.

To that end, I noticed that the discussion at the end of the meeting regarding usage hours of City resources (PTC public tennis courts) caused some consternation with some in the tennis contingent. This was not my intention. Nonetheless, I do not understand why it is not reasonable or pertinent to discuss the literal use of City resources when a decision is to be made about sharing between sports. It seems common sense for the City and/or the Mayor to have the authority to seek out accurate data about the utilization of any City-owned tennis club. This seems precisely the information that Parks and Recreation and the Mayor would use as part of its decision-making process regarding the temporary repurposing of the six PTC tennis courts to pickleball. According to an article in the Union-Tribune from 1979, the City listened to the tennis community's plea for more courts *based upon utilization of available courts*. I've attached the article for your review.

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PASD carefully looked at readily available data as well as made physical visits to several tennis sites before narrowing its request to PTC precisely so that the least number of tennis players would be inconvenienced by any proposed repurposing of tennis courts to pickleball, even temporarily. Our review of PTC's numbers over several months showed that most of the hours of actual tennis playing (individuals and teams) could be accommodated with hours available on six courts. (Certainly, if PTC's own records show otherwise, and the records of all the nearby *public* tennis clubs can show they are booked solid, particularly in the morning when most of PTC's private "for profit" clinics and lessons happen, each club will make this information available.)

Our analysis shows that the real "elephant in the room" issue appears to be the potential reduction of hours or need to move the private "for profit" activities that generally consume more than half of the tennis court hours reserved on PTC's website, such as clinics and lessons.

PASD understands that the City is at work on making future SUP clearer on the issue of public clubs permitting private professionals to earn money on public property without compensating the club or the City. From our perspective, City assets such as its tennis courts, should be prioritized for use by players playing the game rather than use by the private "for profit" activity that financially benefits neither the public club nor the City. And where, as here, there are thousands of local players searching for a place to play pickleball, they should have priority over a commercial enterprise that financially benefits a handful of professionals. This seems particularly true where such enterprises were never approved by the City through Parks and Recreation in the first place.

The tennis community, in real solidarity with the pickleball community, could solve potential issues caused by temporarily repurposed courts by assisting one another with these private for-profit pursuits. No doubt there is redundancy of activities offered at many public clubs. Further, many tennis players are members of more than one public tennis club and participate in games, clinics, lessons, and even teams at multiple locations. It seems reasonable that one or more local clubs could accept the few displaced activities from PTC on a temporary basis. As a suggestion, where those activities are "for profit," such as clinics and lessons, it seems a logical solution to move them to another location rather than inconvenience the day-to-day tennis player looking for a game.

PASD celebrates the fun and excitement – the momentum – that comes from joining multiple courts together in a sport like pickleball and tennis. That is why this organization has tirelessly pursued the goal of creating a pickleball facility worthy of our great City. As Stefan acknowledged at our meeting, he and Mike made mistakes along the way of their two-year plus odyssey to establish a pickleball facility. However, no one can doubt their sincerity, drive, and work ethic to make this happen for all the pickleball players in the city as soon as possible.

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Last, a housekeeping matter: I've attached PASD's 501(c)(3) letter for your review as we spoke of at the at the meeting.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions during your and the mayor's consideration of our proposal. Thank you again for your leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Juliana B. Humphrey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Juliana B. Humphrey
PASD Member

Encl.