

June 15, 2023 Parks and Recreation Board – Public Comment

Steve Leffler – San Diego District Tennis Association

I am a member of the San Diego tennis community and attend clinics at 40-year old Peninsula Tennis Club (PTC) in Robb Field (Ocean Beach). PTC and the greater San Diego tennis community recognizes the need for more pickleball courts in Ocean Beach.

However, PTC has been under unwarranted and unrelenting attack and harassment for over a year from what began as for-profit activity and then morphed into a so-called non-profit (PASD) whose sole mission according to their bylaws, is not, as you would think, to grow their sport but is “to repurpose lightly-used tennis courts”. PASD’s website, supporter emails, and advisory group presentations continually feature the “temporary” conversion of half of PTC to pickleball without realistic consideration of the dire consequences to the 500+ members and ~1,000 occasional users of the club who would be extremely hard-pressed to find affordable club options comparable to PTC to play and take lessons. Barnes Tennis Center and other clubs cannot take up the outflow. Many of the local clubs have long waitlists. Note that the PASD group often refers to “for profit” instructors at PTC (these are widely-recognized tennis professionals who provide high quality clinics and lessons at among the lowest rates in town), while claiming that they will offer instruction at their purported post-PTC pickleball center.

Aside from the violation of the approved Robb Field park plan (GDP) by the establishment of a separate pickleball facility, it is clear that temporary occupancy of PTC gives little incentive to the pickleball group to pursue the cost and time involved in fundraising for and developing a dedicated facility of their own under the GDP amendment process currently underway. In other words, to do what the tennis community has done.

Fortunately, any rationale for the PASD request to convert half of PTC to pickleball has now been eliminated as Barnes Tennis Center (800 ft away from PTC) has announced the public availability of 19 new, lighted, dedicated pickleball courts in July (with 7 open now). Furthermore, neither Robb Field CRG or Mission Bay Park Committee (MBPC), the relevant recreation advisory groups for Robb Field, has recommended adoption of any specific PASD proposal so their proposal to takeover half or more of PTC should not have come before the Parks and Recreation Board until approved by both recreation advisory boards. MBPC did support pickleball somewhere in Mission Bay and we certainly have that situation now with the 19 courts at Barnes, just 800 feet away from PTC.

Finally, the PASD bylaws have an interesting and potentially profitable feature compared to local tennis non-profit organizations. While, PTC with an 6-person board, the San Diego District Tennis Association (SDDTA) with more than 30 board members, and local clubs such as Balboa Tennis Club and La Jolla Tennis Club have purely voluntary and non-compensated boards of directors, the PASD bylaws (as currently found on their website) indicate that “not more than forty-nine percent (49%) of the persons serving on the Board may be interested persons. An interested person is (i) any person being compensated by the corporation for services...” Do the math.