

MUNICIPALITY OF MONROEVILLE

CITIZENS' NIGHT MEETING

MARCH 7, 2023

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Mayor Nick Gresock.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence observed.

ROLL CALL

The Recording Secretary, Sharon McIndoe, called and the following were present: Joe Hyzy, Eric Poach, Steve Wolfram, Mike Adams, Bob Williams, Dennis Biondo, Tim Little, Bob Wrat cher, Josie Rock, Paul Hugus, Joe Sedlak and Paul Whealdon. Mr. Stevenson was absent.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS AND REMARKS

MONROEVILLE PICKLEBALL ASSOCIATION

Mr. Emil Heintzinger, President of the Monroeville Pickleball Association, came forward with Danielle Cole and Paul Estock from the Parks and Recreation Department. Mr. Estock thanked everyone for their support. Ms. Cole distributed information to mayor and council regarding the presentation and handouts.

Mr. Heintzinger explained the Monroeville Pickleball Association is guided by a mission statement, bylaws and their vision. He introduced the board members, Don Konsole, Beth Plancheck, Larry Brandstatter and Rich Parsons. He gave an overview of how the pickleball courts were built in 2019 and Covid was in 2020 when they got started. He explained how as people came to play they needed guidance and rules so they formed a loose knit committee. He stated then they started to plan events with volunteers to help. He reported last summer they were challenged by one of their players about who made the rules so then they needed to be official. He explained how they formed their board and put together a strategic plan of what pickleball could be for Monroeville which was presented to the parks and recreation and the administration. He reported they have a good working relationship.

Mr. Estock pointed out their by-laws and reported how they reviewed models from different locales and he mentioned Cranberry for the way it should be done.

Ms. Cole reviewed the benefits of forming an association which has two categories. She suggested the benefits to the municipality of forming an association would be an income generator and allow for self-sustaining maintenance and expansion of pickleball in Monroeville. She approximated with the current projected membership of 200 at the current proposed membership fee it would be \$16,000 in the first year. She added they were following a model that has grown in Cranberry and they see the potential for Monroeville. She pointed out people coming to Monroeville to play pickleball brings tax revenue to the community and it is good publicity. She felt it would be a positive representation of what the community members have built in Monroeville and what amenities are offered in the community.

Ms. Cole reported the second category of benefits is for community members because it allows for court expansion and maintenance. She further explained it would prioritize play times for the association members and allows the committee to organize and plan community events. She added through the line item created with the membership fees it would create the self-sustaining model of maintenance and growth as they grow pickleball in Monroeville.

Mr. Heintzinger reported currently pickleball is growing at an annual rate of 20 percent and 36 million people play pickleball in America. He stated Plum High School has pickleball classes in gym so the youth are getting introduced to the game. He explained after they formed their committee and decided what direction they wanted to go, he estimated 60 people a day play at the parks, seven days a week, four weeks a month for seven months a year from April to the end of October. He added that equates to 12,000 visits to Monroeville to play pickleball. He felt at the 20 percent growth it will not be long before they see 20,000 per year coming to the municipality to play. Mr. Estock added that would be residents and non-residents.

Ms. Cole reported the membership benefits would be primetime exclusive court usage, Monday through Saturday 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and Monday through Friday 4 to 8 p.m. She added everyone would get an exclusive membership tee shirt, entry into one tournament per year and receive more opportunities for skilled based tournaments, buddy passes and organized play and events. She suggested it would allow for organized play and events which could include a picnic or a bash and allow for different levels of play. She suggested they have already separated and categorized but it makes it more functional and allows them to work on their skill sets to challenge themselves.

Ms. Cole explained they would issue membership tags which would be issued through the recreation and parks department after completion of the membership form that would be scanned on entry of the courts. She reported it would not be policed but it would be incentivized. She explained the person with the most scans during the designated times will get a free membership next year. She reported they would create that self-sustaining line model with a designated line item. She pointed out a good reason to join this year is that the 2024 Membership Renewal process would give preference to full-season members from the previous year. She stated everyone that joins now would always have a place in the Pickleball Association.

Ms. Cole referred to the membership form in the packets for completion for a seasonal or monthly pass. She explained there are different membership options with the season pass running from April 1 to October 31 at a cost of \$80 for residents and \$90 for non-residents and also a partner's discount of \$10 for people residing in the same household. She pointed out it would be \$150 for resident partners and \$170 for non-resident partners. She then referred to the monthly pass that could be for April, May, June, July, August, September or October at a cost of \$25 for residents and \$30 for non-residents. She stated there are daily passes for \$3 for residents or \$4 for non-residents and reminded everyone all the members get one buddy pass per month or seven per season.

Mr. Estock reported the municipality dedicated six courts when the courts were redone back in 2019 and everything was color coded. He referred to the current layout and explained that in the last year six temporary courts were added on the back two tennis courts. He suggested everyone is aware of the safety and functionality of the current courts and how it is being addressed. He explained part of the process when the courts are redone is they are hoping for support of Plan A. He stated there are price issues that have to be addressed but they are proposing the current six dedicated in the front and

six dedicated in the back but are concerned about where tennis will be located. He suggested possibly moving the tennis up to the front where the basketball court is located with the blank slate. He felt some additional space may need to be added on both sides to meet the tennis criteria but the width is fine. He reported they were hoping to put four-foot fencing between each of the courts from end to end on the courts to keep the ball in play on the courts being played. He pointed out that is part of the plan when these changes are made. Ms. Cole added planning would address their safety concerns that would improve function for all different sports in the Community Park. Mr. Estock suggested the association would like 12 permanent courts. He explained the ultimate plan would be the 12 existing courts and the expansion to potentially get to 20 dedicated pickleball courts. He stated it is something for the future that would help with national tournaments.

Ms. Cole referred to the information in the packet that reflects projections of the beds and heads theory. She reported 19 courts are needed for a national tournament but they made it 20. She explained a national tournament could bring to Monroeville lodging revenue, overnight guests and miscellaneous revenue such as retail, food, beverage, and entertainment which is projected at \$82,000 for a tournament weekend. She suggested by investing in those extra eight courts the municipality could build a gem for publicity but also fiscally for the community.

Mr. Estock added the current location of the courts needs improvements such as repainting in contrasting colors and permanent netting for the individual courts. He reported Cranberry stopped their memberships at 800 because they could not handle any more and they have 13 courts currently. He stated they currently have 800 members paying \$100 and non-residents are paying \$110 with a membership of 1,200 members on 13 courts. He reported they recently had an expansion of \$5 million to expand their courts and put a bubble over top of the existing court. He felt this could potentially be a destination in this area because there is nothing else around like it. Ms. Cole suggested Monroeville has a prime location.

Mr. Heintzinger pointed out the association will seek funding through grants and they are looking for sponsorship opportunities. He felt this would benefit everyone, Monroeville and the players.

Ms. Cole pointed out they already have a community of 200 people that they want to hold on to and to jump start. She reviewed the frequently asked questions. She stated the association gave lessons to 60 new players last year and they plan to continue lessons through parks and recreation again this year and there will be an expansion for a Youth Instruction Summer Camp. She reported it is one of their most popular classes and it fills in a day or two because there is a high demand. She added non-members can still play on the courts at Monroeville Community West Monday through Friday 12 to 4 p.m. or Saturdays 12 to 8 p.m. and all-day Sunday during park hours. She was hoping to put auxiliary courts at the neighborhood parks open to the public for use. She briefly reviewed that it would take an existing tennis court and line pickleball on top of that then an apparatus that would adjust the net height to be regulation for pickleball but would be functional for tennis. She suggested the auxiliary courts would allow them to advertise the association with the hopes that people would move on to join the association. She asserted parks and recreation supports the tennis with 17 municipal courts even with the proposed changes. Brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Poach referred to the association developing and growing. He inquired whether they would be a non-profit association and Mr. Heintzinger answered negatively. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Little inquired who would scan the tags and Ms. Cole answered it would be self-scan. She added they would not police it but have incentives.

Mayor Gresock inquired whether they are planning on an outdoor scanner and Ms. Cole answered affirmatively. Mr. Estock added they have reviewed the system at the senior center. Further discussion ensued. Mr. Heintzinger briefly reviewed how they take care of people who want to play on the courts. Ms. Cole added they want to be welcoming and inviting and it is a community based positive impact in the parks.

Mr. Biondo inquired whether the funds generated would go towards maintaining the courts and Ms. Cole answered affirmatively and added for growth too. Mr. Biondo questioned whether there are specific grants for pickleball and Mr. Estock answered he has not seen anything yet. Ms. Cole added they have found grants that would qualify but it has the matching process. Mr. Heintzinger stated grant money is available but they cannot apply until they are an official organization.

Mayor Gresock felt it is a great idea. He pointed out the condition of the courts are currently an issue because of the contractor who installed them. He encouraged council to start moving down the path of fixing the courts and figuring out the plan for expansion then the litigation can be handled by the litigation team. He requested prices for Plan A and the Ultimate Plan and he was hoping to expand so that tournaments can be held here so they have room to grow on the courts and for the groups to grow. He suggested only grass space would be taken away from the park and this is the perfect time to do it. He recommended this be worked through the parks and recreation and public works to get prices for the plans for the two options. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Biondo suggested it all be done at once, when the repairs are done and the new courts are done.

Mr. Adams inquired about the plan for the resurfacing and Mr. Hugus answered they have gone through a process since the current play surface deteriorated. He stated it is not what you know but what can be proved so they did core borings of the existing surfaces, had laboratory analysis done to determine whether the asphalt or the play surface was at fault. He explained it was not the asphalt but the play surface installed. He suggested until the municipality gets to the next step with the solicitor they will not accept those findings. He felt there are two different options which is to repair what is currently there with an overlay of the existing surface with a new rubber product and a new play surface put down over top of it at a cost of \$230,000. He explained this would leave the existing courts, do patch repairs, repair the seams and install a new product. He indicated the second theory would be to mill an inch and a half of that top layer off which is the play surface and the asphalt which would require the fence to be removed. He stated the fence would be removed, the surface milled, and put asphalt back on with a new play surface on top at a cost of \$280,000. Further discussion ensued about the milling and replacement. Mayor Gresock inquired whether the fence would be replaced as it currently exists and Ms. Cole answered affirmatively. Mr. Williams questioned whether that price is for all of the existing courts. Mr. Estock felt 12 courts would be awesome but the cost is the issue.

Mr. Williams inquired whether all of the members have reviewed the application and Ms. Cole answered affirmatively. She asserted once it is approved it can be presented to the public.

Mayor Gresock questioned whether there could be a cost estimate for adding courts. Mr. Hugus explained there would be some construction to this project. Ms. Cole added there is a grade differential. Mr. Williams suggested the current courts should be operational while the construction is taking place and everything should not be shut down. Mr. Hugus stated if the play surface is being applied they do not want to mobilize twice with one company so it would be one time in one shot which is more cost effective. Mr. Estock pointed out everyone is aware that it is time sensitive.

Mr. Heintzinger pointed out they have over 200 people in their data base that play pickleball and they currently play inside at the All-American Field House and other places. He felt there is a kind of urgency because if they can do something by the end of May the players still have places to play but the players will go other places once school is out because they lose the indoor facility and they will lose players. He was concerned that if the courts did not get fixed people will find other places to play. He suggested if they are going to do something they want to do it while they have positive momentum.

Mr. Poach stated it is the repair first before the season but public works is not ready to do that. Mr. Estock pointed out it is also weather sensitive so they can look at the 12 then consider the additional at a later date. Ms. Cole felt people may be more patient if the municipality is getting 20 courts for the potential for the national draw.

Mayor Gresock inquired about how quickly the courts can be installed with ideal conditions and weather. Mr. Hugus explained the play surface cannot be installed until at least mid-May because the temperature has to be 50 degrees for a constant period of time or there will be a problem with the product. He suggested it would take a total of ten days to do all of the courts and he felt it would be mid-May or Memorial Day. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Adams inquired whether there is a warranty with this type of surface and Mr. Hugus answered five years but the warranty is not great. Mr. Adams questioned whether he has seen any other kinds of surfaces. Mr. Hugus explained he looked at a surface that was applied over a new asphalt surface not over an existing play surface that have deficiencies like what is existing.

Mr. Williams questioned whether the materials are available and Mr. Hugus answered affirmatively.

Mr. Poach referenced how it would affect the association during mid-season. Mr. Heintzinger suggested it was uncertain but they could communicate with their members. Mr. Adams pointed out the courts are currently playable and Mr. Heintzinger agreed but added they have deteriorated. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Biondo inquired whether the municipality had to act for them to set up the association. Mayor Gresock explained any action would be taken at the regular council meeting next week with discussion with administration. He suggested the association move forward with their organized group so they are in contact with people to share concerns. Mayor Gresock requested everyone present to show their hand and almost everyone in attendance was in support.

Mr. Williams appreciated everyone showing up and reported he did a site visit and could not understand how any more people could use the courts.

(A brief break was taken at 7:42 p.m.)

(The meeting reconvened at approximately 7:50 p.m.)

ADJOURNMENT

No one else came forward at this time to make comment. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy J. Little
Municipal Manager

TJL/sam