



Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

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REPORT #: OPS-24-015 **COMMITTEE DATE:** 2024-04-16
REPORT TO: COTW-General **DUE IN COUNCIL:** 2024-04-30
SUBJECT: Outdoor Pickleball Courts (Virgil Sportspark) - Reopening

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 Council approve the reopening of the outdoor pickleball courts in the Virgil Sportspark on Monday, June 17, 2024;
- 1.2 Council approve the operations of the outdoor pickleball courts in the Virgil Sportspark as per the reopening provisions in Appendix I; and,
- 1.3 Council approve a transfer of \$10,000 from the Capital Reserve to a capital project to purchase acoustic panels contingent upon the outcome of an Ontario Trillium Grant Application.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Town staff and the NOTL Pickleball Club have actively discussed options for reopening the outdoor pickleball courts in Virgil.
- Both Town staff and the NOTL Pickleball Club are committed to providing an inclusive recreational opportunity and addressing noise concerns by introducing acoustic panels and noise-reduction paddles.
- Both Town staff and the NOTL Pickleball Club are dedicated to ensuring the recommended measures are in place for the proposed June 17, 2024, opening date.
- Staff have applied for an Ontario Trillium Grant for the acoustic panels; however, staff are seeking approval for the transfer of \$10,000 to the project should the grant application be unsuccessful. Should the grant be successful, the contribution from the Capital Reserve will not be required.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a reopening plan for the outdoor pickleball courts in Virgil and seek direction to proceed as described.

4. BACKGROUND

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's outdoor pickleball courts in Virgil were constructed in 2019. The existing two tennis courts were slated for replacement, and Council pivoted the

renovation from tennis courts (2) to pickleball courts (6). This decision helped grow the sport of pickleball in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

In 2022, the Town was involved in legal proceedings that challenged the Town's Noise By-law, stating that the noise from the pickleball courts was contravening the by-law. The matter went to court. The Town was unsuccessful in its defence. On June 15, 2022, the Provincial court judge imposed a hiatus on the outdoor courts for two years. The hiatus will be lifted on June 15, 2024.

During this two-year hiatus, the Town has made accommodations for pickleball on the dry pad in Centennial Arena from mid-April to mid-August. This resulted in some modifications to the dry pad's scheduling and operation. Items such as laying down line tape for 6 pickleball courts and purchasing additional indoor pickleball nets occurred.

At the June 20, 2022, Council meeting, Council revised and approved amendments to the existing noise bylaw to exempt sound arising from sports or recreation activities on Town-owned properties. The amendment to Schedule A – Permitted Sound in the Noise Bylaw 4588B-21 was as follows:

That Schedule A, attached hereto, be amended by adding the following:

Any emission of sound or vibration on Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake (the "Town") owned properties arising from sports or recreation activities, as approved by the Director of Operations or delegate for the Town, during the hours of 7 a.m. to 11 :00 p.m., provided that the Director of Operations or delegate for the Town may further restrict the hours for any specific sporting or recreational activity.

5. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

Town staff and the NOTL Pickleball Club have been in discussions since January 2024 on a proposed reopening plan for the outdoor courts. The NOTL Pickleball Club membership has expanded exponentially since its inception in 2017. Currently, their membership is at approximately 580. The anticipated membership growth with the outdoor courts opening has the potential to hit 700 members by the summer.

To reopen the courts, Town staff, along with the NOTL Pickleball Club, discussed multiple factors that would help ease the outdoor courts back into activation. The factors we considered were:

- Reduction of the hours of available playtime (public and club times)
- Controlling access to the courts during certain hours of the day
- Noise-reduced paddles
- Installation of acoustic panels to help reduce the noise from the courts

Town staff have drafted measures for reopening the pickleball courts. They are identified in **Appendix I**.

The Town will operate the Centennial Arena as six pickleball courts from mid-April until June 17, 2024. Leading up to June 17, Town staff will meet with Minor Lacrosse to see if they require more floor time to complement their existing times at Meridian Credit Union Arena. Alternatively, Staff will market the facility to fill available dry floor timeslots in the Centennial Arena.

6. STRATEGIC PLAN

The content of this report supports the following Strategic Plan initiatives:

Pillar

1. Vibrant & Complete Community

Priority

3.1 Assets

Action

Other

7. OPTIONS

- 7.1 **Option 1:** Council approves the proposed reopening plans for the outdoor pickleball courts in the Virgil Sportspark. **(Recommended)**
- 7.2 **Option 2:** Council declines opening the outdoor pickleball courts and directs staff to continue the operations of the indoor courts in Centennial Arena.
(Not Recommended)
- 7.3 **Option 3:** Council provides a different direction on reopening of the outdoor pickleball courts. (Not Recommended)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Town Staff have applied for a grant through the Ontario Trillium Foundation for \$32,000. Should the grant not be successful, \$10,000 will be allocated to this project from the Capital Reserve should Council approve this report. The Town will approach the NOTL Pickleball Club to fund the balance of the project if the grant is unsuccessful.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental impacts.

10. COMMUNICATIONS

Following Council's approval to reopen the outdoor pickleball courts, staff will inform the NOTL Pickleball Club and collaborate with the Communications Team to disseminate information to the public through the Town's website and social media channels. Additionally, signage will be created to provide onsite instructions related to noise mitigation, as required. The Communications Team will also prepare comprehensive communication packages for Council Members to ensure they are well-equipped to address any inquiries from the public regarding reopening the courts.

11. CONCLUSION

Town staff recommends reopening the outdoor pickleball courts with the changes to the operations identified in the report.

12. PREVIOUS REPORTS

n/a

13. APPENDICES

- **Appendix I** – Reopening Measures – Virgil Sportspark – Pickleball Courts
- **Appendix II** – Acoustic Panel Layout – Virgil Sportspark - Pickleball Courts

Respectfully submitted:

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