

To: **Mayor and City Council**  
Through: **Ryan Schroeder, City Manager**  
From: **Dave Schletty, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director**  
Date: **March 22, 2021**

## **Conversion of Emerson Tennis Court to Pickleball Courts**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Pickleball is an increasingly popular sport played by people of all ages, but especially popular with older adults. There are currently two City parks (Southview and Emerson) that have pickleball lines painted within the tennis court lines and share nets. The former WSP YMCA had pickleball leagues that played in their gymnasium. Surrounding communities have made recent investments in pickleball: Mendota Heights has temporary courts in the summer within their Marie Park hockey rink and Inver Grove Heights spent \$300K to remove four tennis courts and replace with six new pickleball courts at North Valley Park in 2019. Pickleball has been a discussion item by West St Paul City Council, residents and Park & Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) for many years. City staff has been unsuccessful in multiple grant applications to add dedicated pickleball courts over the last few years.

At their January 2021 meeting, the PRAC decided to make pickleball a priority for the upcoming year. At their February 2021 meeting, staff presented the PRAC with two options to add permanent dedicated pickleball courts. The two options were for converting an existing single tennis court into two pickleball courts (the footprint for pickleball is much smaller than tennis). The City has single tennis courts at Haskell and Emerson Parks, along with double courts at Marthaler, Southview and Weschcke Parks. The Marthaler and Weschcke courts are heavily used by older adult groups for tennis matches at least three days per week and would not be used as much without both courts being present. Southview already gets both pickleball and tennis usage, but easily accessible, since it is so far from the street and is used mainly by residents that leave in nearby apartments. Staff felt converting a single court (either Emerson or Haskell) was the best option. There is currently money budgeted for court resurfacing in 2021 and Emerson tennis and basketball courts were designated to receive this improvement, as all other courts had resurfacing completed within the past 5 years. Additionally, Emerson courts are located next to the street for easy parking and access, as opposed to Haskell where the tennis court is tucked in the corner of the park away from the street and parking. PRAC members agreed Emerson was the best location and made the decision to hold a public meeting at the March meeting and make a recommendation to Council.

Staff sent a notice to the 28 residents that surround the park to gather input and comments about the conversion of the tennis court to pickleball. Staff received two email comments one in favor and one against the proposal. Two residents attended the meeting and gave personal input on the proposal, again with one in favor and one against. PRAC members had a thorough discussion and unanimously voted to recommend, to Council, the conversion of the single tennis court at Emerson to two new pickleball courts. While the members said they hated taking away facilities, in this case it made sense to add new

amenities that serve and underrepresented portion of the West St Paul population, in older adults. They also sighted past comments from Council regarding pickleball and comments in the recent “City Survey” mentioning the need for pickleball courts.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Resurfacing of courts as well as conversion of tennis to pickleball will fall within the budgeted amount and will not have an impact on the 2021 budget.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the conversion of the single tennis court at Emerson Park to two new pickleball courts.

Attachments: February & March PRAC Minutes, Letter to Residents, Layout Showing Conversion