

## Speech to Mayor and Council May 2024

**Introduction:** My name is Jim Gilpin. I am president of the Yukon Pickleball Association, the YPA. I live in Hillcrest.

The YPA is the sport governing body for pickleball in the territory. We offer a variety of programs such as skill development, leagues, round robins, and tournaments for our members. Our certified instructors teach novices through the City's Active Living program.

Interest in pickleball is exploding. Pickleball Canada's membership almost tripled to over 60,000 in the last three years. During that period our membership increased fourfold to over 200. Additionally, about 125 non-members drop-in to play at the CGC.

**Tonight, the YPA is seeking your support in determining a suitable location for dedicated outdoor pickleball courts.**

### Existing outdoor court options

- a) **Mt. McIntyre:** YPA has 4 pickleball courts which overlap one of the four tennis courts at Mt. Mc. **Tennis Yukon (TY) maintains a 10-year lease with the City and is responsible for the O and M.** We pay Tennis Yukon the same user fees as tennis players but have restricted access, negotiated annually with TY. This year, we are allowed access prior to 1 pm every day, and after 5 pm on Fridays and Sundays.

Because of our limited access, our working age members, now 55% of our membership, and increasing, can only access the courts on the weekends.

- b) **Community rinks:** City staff have painted pickleball court lines on community rinks. YPA advised against this approach. These surfaces are rough and irregular asphalt. Unpredictable bounces of pickleballs could result in players tripping, slipping, and falling. Also, the City can expect noise complaints, given their proximity to homes.

### Potential outdoor court options

For pickleball to thrive in the summer months we need **dedicated outdoor courts**. YPA could then offer programs throughout the day and give working-age members an opportunity to play in the evening.

### Where to locate pickleball courts?

Over the last several years we investigated 12 sites in the City, using the following criteria:

- distance to residences (>100 m, to avoid potential noise complaints),
- Land ownership (either YG or City-owned),
- zoning (PR),

- and access to parking.

We discussed these 12 sites with City Parks Management staff, in 2020, and in 2023, and with YG politicians. To date there has been no action taken by either government to investigate the feasibility of sites we suggested.

**Rather than a scattering of poor-quality courts around the City, we recommend one site with at least 6 high quality pickleball courts.** In the 1990's a number of mediocre tennis courts were scattered around the City. The tennis community lobbied successfully for 4 high-quality courts at Mt. Mc. We wish to achieve now, what the tennis community achieved then, in 1998.

Although **YPA is open to considering other sites**, currently we have identified a site which meets our criteria. It is City owned park land across Robert Service Way from the campground, immediately north of the ball diamonds. Note: Initially we considered re-purposing one of the ball diamonds. But this was prior to the announcement of a new elementary school at the Takhini ball diamonds.

The undeveloped land is low and requires fill. Also, trees would need to be removed, and the organic material stripped away. In your package is a location map of our proposed site, and a 6-court layout. We don't know the suitability of this site from a geotechnical perspective, nor how much compacted fill would be required to create a suitable base for courts.

Our requests are:

- a) To get the City's approval for a geotechnical survey to determine the suitability of this site for pickleball courts, and the cost of preparing a suitable base for building six courts.
- b) If ground conditions prove satisfactory, the YPA is seeking the City's approval, in principle, for a lease with Yukon Pickleball to allow for the construction of six outdoor pickleball courts. **We are not seeking funding from the City for the capital cost of building the courts.** But, without a lease agreement, we are unable to access other funding sources. **Likewise, we are not seeking funding from the City for operations and maintenance**, as we intend to collect annual user fees, like Tennis Yukon, to cover O and M costs. I have included a map showing our candidate site, and a drawing of a 6-court layout. And, if time permits, I've included a brief note on the need for more gym space to truly allow pickleball to achieve it's potential in Whitehorse.

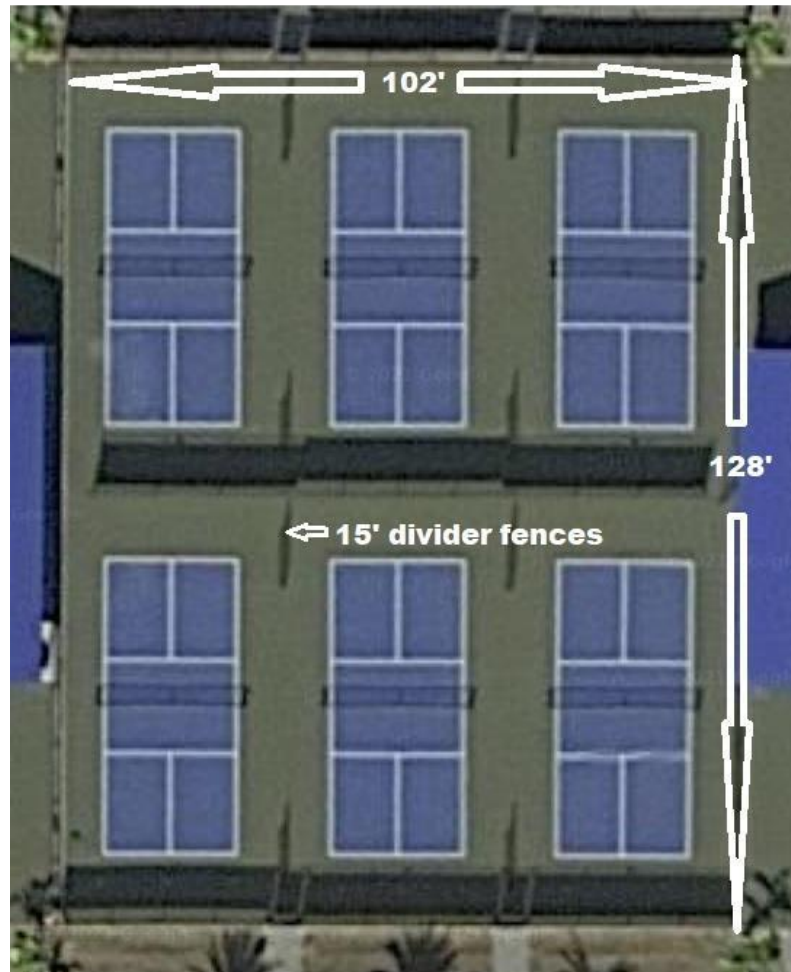
Any questions?

**Appendix 1: Potential Site of Dedicated Pickleball Courts**



## Appendix 2:

### A 6-court layout



## Appendix 3: A Note on Indoor courts

Given our climate, we are forced to play indoors for about 8 months of the year. Indoor court times for running leagues and other programs is even more limited than outdoor times. So, although tonight's presentation focuses on the need for outdoor courts, **for pickleball to truly thrive in Whitehorse we need more gym space.** The CGC offers daily pickleball times. But only drop-in is allowed. We cannot offer leagues, lessons, etc., at these times. The CGC cannot keep up with the demand for pickleball and accommodate the wide array of sports it is mandated to serve. We are engaged with other sports organizations wishing to re-purpose the existing Polarettes gym at St. Francis of Assisi School. Building gyms (and schools) is a YG responsibility. So, although a long-term goal is more gym space for pickleball and other sports, this is more the purview of YG. Tonight's focus is on outdoor courts since this is a more achievable goal in the short term and within your purview.