

Dear Mr. Gustin and DRB Members,

As you know, the residents of 98 Sunset Cliff propose to construct a pickleball court in the front yard of the property they have recently purchased. Neighbors on this street and in the adjacent Strathmore Development who are aware of this project are overwhelmingly opposed to this plan. The objection to having a pickle ball court on a very small street with houses placed less than 15 feet from one another is NOISE. Not just any noise, but the particularly penetrating noise this sport creates.

Unlike tennis, where the ball is soft and the racket surface is made of nylon strings, pickleball play consists of a hard wooden racket repeatedly whacking a hard plastic ball, played on a hard surfaced court. Striking the hard ball with the hard face of the pickleball racket creates a loud pinging/popping sound which carries hundreds of yards. A pickleball instructor recently informed me that "For some people this sound is hard to tolerate". When I asked him who has trouble tolerating this sound, he answered, "Anyone who doesn't like high pitched pings every three seconds". Numerous online and print articles have been written about the public's reaction to the noise associated with pickleball. The noise is described as "intolerable" or as some synonym of intolerable.

Pickleball courts are almost always associated with public recreational spaces.( Not small residential neighborhoods.) And even in these cases, where people expect to encounter noises associated with public recreational facilities, the residents and owners of neighboring houses find the associated noise of pickleball particularly, as previously stated, intolerable.

Conversely, in residential neighborhoods, people expect to enjoy the peace, quiet, and calm of their homes as they were when they bought their properties. If the new purchasers of 98 Sunset Cliff intended to install a pickleball court in their front yard, which would unquestionably interfere with the peace and quiet reasonably expected by Sunset Cliff and Strathmore residents, one would wonder why they didn't choose to live in an area where each house is separated from its neighbors by hundreds of feet if not even acres. There is also strong sentiment, validated by realtors, that the well known noise emanating from pickleball courts detracts from the resale value of neighboring properties. This specific issue really raises the larger question of what level of noise is acceptable and environmentally healthy to allow within city limits.

If construction of a pickleball court on Sunset Cliff Road were to be permitted, how could everyone else's concerns about nuisance noise be addressed. Because this sport requires a specific ball and racket, (and a hard ground surface), the sound associated with playing can not really be reduced by requiring softer equipment. So what about restricting hours of play? Due to the heat reflected off the hard surface of a pickleball court, people are more likely to play this sport when the outdoor temperature and sun are less intense. This would be in the early morning or evening hours, the very times when neighbors most count on peace and quiet. Plus, since most people on our street either work remotely from home or are retired, they are at home throughout the day, and would be disturbed by hearing pinging noises every three seconds. So even regulating playtime between 9 and 5 would still expose almost all of us to nuisance noise.

Another possible sound remedy would be to require the construction of tall sound-proofing walls around the court. This is both unattractive and costly.

In summary, a pickleball court with its attendant downside does not belong in a city residential setting. Those New North End residents who want to play pickleball can use the nearby public pickleball courts available at Appletree Point.

I hope to be able to express some of these concerns by joining the April 4th DRB meeting by Zoom.

Sincerely,

Marcia Hemley