

Juneau Tennis Community Survey – Summary Results (44 respondents)

Summary

On the afternoon of 3/4/24, the tennis community received an email saying that the PRAC would be voting the next day to remove the two existing tennis courts at Floyd Dryden (FD) and install a single court in the area currently taken up by two basketball courts. We were told that we would need to submit comments by close of business that same day if we wanted them to be read by the PRAC before their meeting. Given the lack of notice, many tennis players were unable to adequately weigh-in on the issue. The PRAC voted to move forward with the plan to create 4 to 6 dedicated pickleball courts, and leaving only 1 dedicated tennis court and 1 dedicated basketball court at FD.

Days later, tennis players measured the space and determined that it was 14 feet too short to meet minimum standards for a recreational tennis court. We assumed that a new plan would come back to the PRAC, and we sent out a survey to obtain the user group input that was lacking the first time around.



Sunday morning ladies' tennis group at Floyd Dryden, 2019. This group has 22 members, ranging from high schoolers to players beyond 70 years old. They have not been able to play at Floyd Dryden regularly for the last couple of years due to inability to get on the courts.

After our survey was released, we learned that a new plan had been put in place that we believe is fundamentally different from what the PRAC approved on 3/5. The pickleball plan was the same, but the tennis and basketball communities would now share a single, overlapping space, so only one group could play at a time. Rather than the approved plan to provide dedicated courts to each of the three user groups, it prioritized the needs of one group, and pitted the other two against each other to battle it out for a single, shared space. Under this plan, if people are playing basketball, tennis would not be played, and vice versa.

Forty-four tennis players responded to the survey during the five-day period that it was posted. 91% of respondents gave permission for us to provide their names and contact information to CBJ, in case data authenticity is in question. We attempted to reach players who are not Alaska Club members (and who only use the public courts). Due to lack of time and resources, we only reached a small number of this group that would likely be most impacted by the proposed significant (25%) reduction of public tennis court availability in Juneau. If you have questions about this report or about any of the data, please contact Colleen McKenna at comckenna@gmail.com.

UPDATE: Tennis players Lauren Smoker and Colleen McKenna met with Parks and Rec Director George Schaaf and Parks and Landscape Supervisor Colby Shibler on 3/28 and discussed compromises that would help to avoid user group conflicts and meet the needs of each group. Details from this discussion are included on pages 5-6.

Tennis players were overwhelmingly opposed to the plan to create a single mixed-use tennis / basketball court.

"...not an equitable solution..."

"...this again puts two sports up against each other and increases risk of conflict..."

"...this proposal puts tennis players in the position of pushing hoopsters out of their space."

"I've never seen this hybrid anywhere else."

"In Anchorage there were basketball courts over tennis courts. Basketball always trumped tennis. "

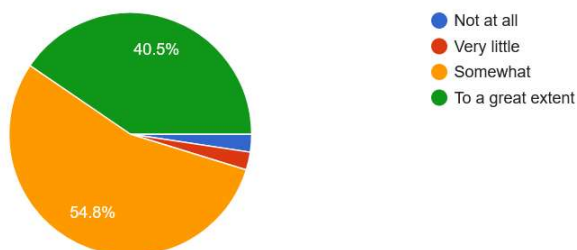
"I'd like to know more about how much use the basketball courts are getting and if there are other courts nearby for kids to use."

"There are plenty of other basketball courts available in Juneau compared to tennis courts."

"...proposal reduces public tennis courts in the valley from 2 to a single shared resource."

"There will be conflicts between tennis and kids wanting to play basketball"

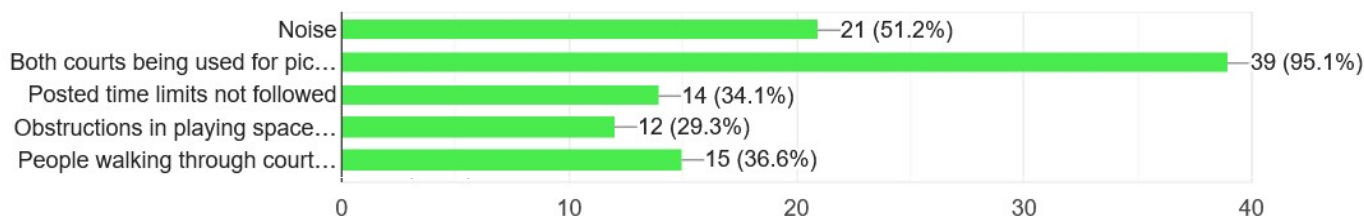
Has pickleball impacted your ability or desire to play tennis at Floyd Dryden?



Testimony and committee discussion at the 3/5 PRAC meeting erroneously indicated a lack of demand for tennis at the Floyd Dryden (FD) courts. 95% of tennis players found that pickleball impacted their ability to play there (55% chose "Somewhat" and 40.5% chose "To a great extent").

Observed or anecdotal "usage levels" do not equal demand.

If your tennis play at Floyd Dryden has been impacted by pickleball, what were the contributing factors? Select all that apply.



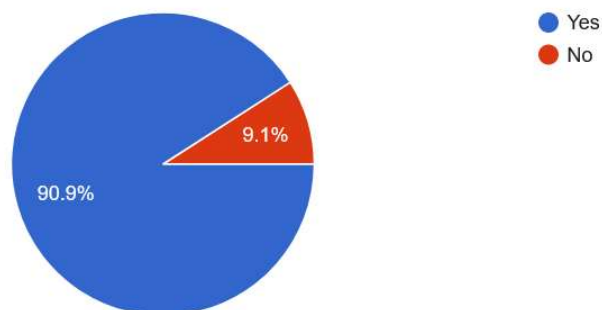
95% of respondents said that "Both courts being used for pickleball" impacted their desire / ability to play at FD. Write-in responses included "[I] felt intimidated", "the pickleballers camp out ... and arrive early to stake claim", and "duct tape on the courts is slippery when wet and makes a tripping hazard".

Observed usage levels are not a valid measure of demand.



Beginners playing tennis at Floyd Dryden in summer 2019.

If Floyd Dryden courts were resurfaced, would you play there more often?



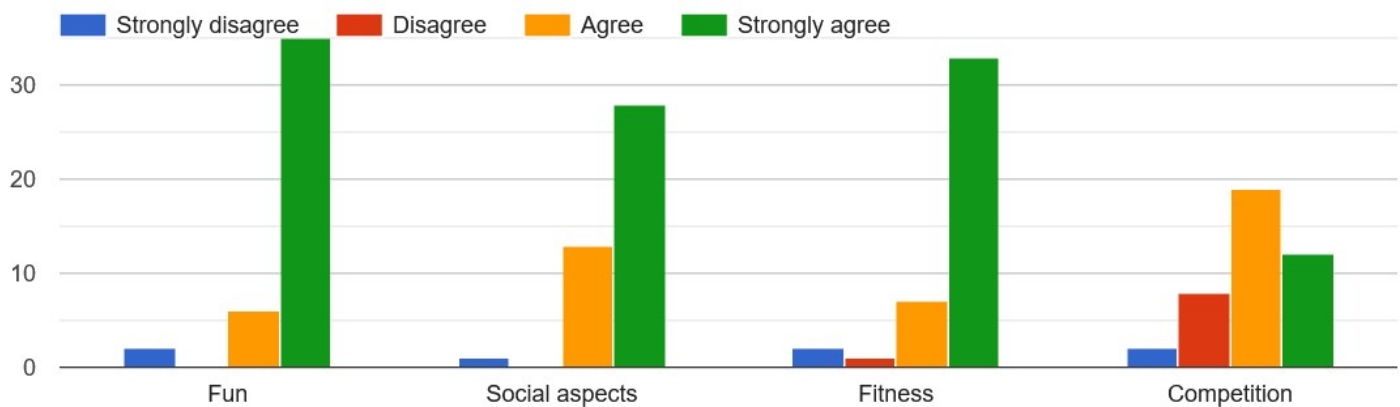
After the court(s) get resurfaced, expect higher demand from tennis players.

"The tennis courts never became available because pickleballers dropped in and out over an entire day, keeping the courts unavailable for tennis throughout the day."

"There were about 30 kids on the high school tennis team and another 30 younger kids in the "youth program". Give these children a "place to play"."

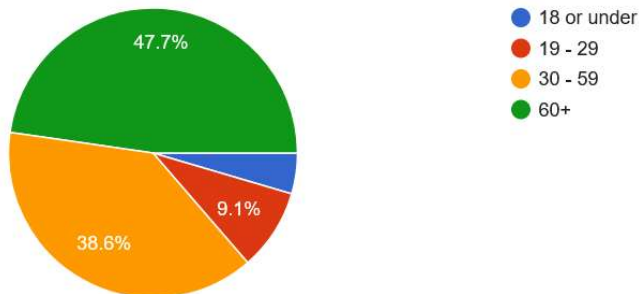
"I think it is great that so many people are playing pickleball. What I don't understand is why additional pickleball courts are always at the expense of tennis courts. You can put a pickleball court almost anywhere."

Which of the following reasons describes why you play tennis?



Tennis improves “Quality of Life” factors for Juneau players (and it is “social” and “fun”, just like pickleball!)

What is your age?*



*Survey was distributed mainly to current Alaska Club members, which likely represents a higher age group with more financial stability.



Players of all ages and abilities play with the high school team every year to help prepare them for tournaments (minors are blocked out).

The Alaska Club is not a viable solution to fully serve the needs of tennis players in the valley. It is difficult to get prime court time, since the space is mixed-use with pickleball, and it is expensive. The Alaska Club has no obligation to continue to provide tennis courts (as demonstrated by repeated cuts to tennis courts and availability over the years). Consider these comments from survey respondents regarding tennis at the Alaska Club:

“It’s too hard to get a court, Used to play very regularly. Pickleball took over, despite there being many other suitable venues in Juneau, Pickleball took over one of the only indoor tennis option in Juneau. TAC membership price was not worth it to never, get a chance to book a tennis court (especially when you are constrained by normal 9-5 M-F work schedule). Pickleball can be played in any of the many, many indoor gym spaces in town. Tennis can only be played on one of two indoor courts in Juneau. It’s really sad because my wife and I fell in love with tennis, but because Pickleball infiltrated the limited tennis resource in Juneau, we can’t play anymore without traveling out of town.”

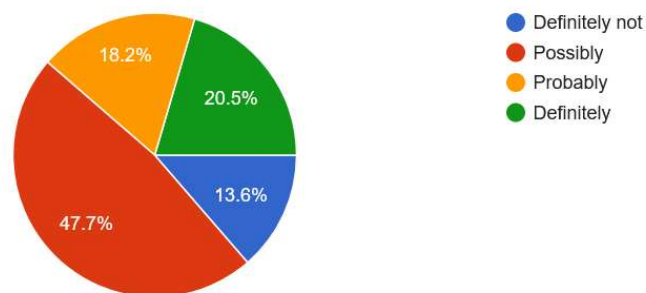
“Existence of Alaska Club courts with an expensive membership is not a justification for reducing outdoor tennis courts.”

“It’s disheartening to have public committee members disregard your concerns for equitable treatment, and instead recommend “go pay to play somewhere else”.”



Juneau players on the beautiful tennis courts in Whitehorse at the annual “Sister City Capital Cup” tennis tournament.

If there were no longer any places to play tennis in Juneau, would you consider moving out of town?



Only 14% of respondents would “definitely not” consider moving out of Juneau if there were NO tennis courts here. When considering only seniors (aged 60+, 21 respondents), 100% would at least “possibly” consider leaving Juneau.

Survey comment: “Incorporating community perspectives and input on use of these community spaces is important.”

Survey respondents were presented with several potential solutions and asked which one(s) they could support. All options were aimed at compromise and acknowledged a limited budget. Options below are listed in order of levels of support. The basketball/tennis mixed-use option was not included in this list because we learned about it after the survey went live. That question was added separately (some comments are included on page 1).

Please select all ideas that you would support:

Option	# in support	% in support*
Keep the two tennis courts where they are, make them tennis-only, and leave the existing fence. Put in dedicated pickleball courts where basketball courts are now. Use money saved from fencing to add sound proofing between pickleball courts and nearby houses. Require that players use commonly available noise-reducing paddles.	27	63%
Reallocate the money that was designated for resurfacing and re-fencing the current tennis courts to create a separate dedicated pickleball area elsewhere (possibly in an existing covered basketball court). Resurface the current basketball courts and dedicate them to basketball. Paint the current tennis courts and dedicate them solely to tennis.	25	58%
Make both courts at Cope Park into dedicated tennis-only courts (remove pickleball lines on 2nd court), and create dedicated pickleball-only courts at Floyd Dryden.	22	51%
Turn both tennis courts into hybrid tennis/pickleball courts and leave the two basketball courts where they are now.	12	28%
Convert tennis courts into pickleball courts, and create one tennis court within the current basketball area (note that it would need to be turned sideways in order to fit, and would eliminate both basketball courts).	4	9%
Stick with the approved plan to have a shortened, dedicated tennis court that takes over one of the basketball courts, and to eliminate the other tennis court (note that the new court will be 14 feet shorter than the minimum standard for recreational courts).	1	2%

*Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

What to do?

On 3/27, tennis community members Colleen McKenna and Lauren Smoker met with CBJ Parks and Rec Director George Schaaf and Parks and Landscape Supervisor Colby Shabler to provide them with input from the tennis user group. We discussed possible compromises that would reduce the potential for user-group conflicts and provide equitable access to courts for each of the three affected user groups.

This was a productive and positive conversation, with the following outcomes and action items. While the “alternative court configuration” described below would require slight compromises by each user group, it is designed to balance their varying needs, and would be a temporary workaround until the Master Plan is completed and each of the three groups has its own, dedicated court space.

The notes below represent Colleen (and Lauren’s) recollections from the meeting and were compiled the day after the meeting. We wanted to submit this to the PRAC with enough time for them to read it before the 4/2 meeting, so George and Colby have not yet had a chance to confirm their agreement that these notes fully reflect the details of our conversation. *Italicized items below were not discussed during the meeting, and were added after the fact.*

Alternative court configuration:

We discussed an alternative configuration at Floyd Dryden that would preserve two public tennis courts, while accomplishing P&R’s goals of having dedicated pickleball courts and a full remaining basketball court. This layout would use the current tennis court space to accommodate three dedicated pickleball courts and a mixed-use tennis court with two pickleball courts on the other side, with a new fence down the middle (rough sketch below). All four of us saw this as a viable alternative that would consider the needs of all three user groups, provided the math works. The basketball court area would still be converted to a mixed-use single tennis court with a single full basketball court across it.

Action item: George and Colby were going to run the numbers to determine if it could work and get back to Colleen and Lauren within a few days (*Colleen subsequently ran the numbers and found that it would be very close, and suggested the possibility of a very small increase to the surface area, and/or small compromises on court sizing in order to fit within the allotted space*).

Implement reservation system:

We discussed using the existing CivicRec system to implement a court reservation system for all courts (including those at Cope Park) in order to reduce conflict between the three affected user groups. We discussed parameters for the system and agreed upon the following (provided the system supports it):

- Same day, one-hour reservations only, to open at 6 AM or so.
- One reservation per person.
- Non-reserved courts are first-come, first-served, with reservations taking priority.
- People with reservations must be able to produce a printout or phone reservation to take over a court, if asked. This will be self-policed, similar to cabin reservations.
- For courts with mixed-use tennis and pickleball, the reservation would cover the entire tennis court space, so a single pickleball reservation gives the reserver one hour on the entire tennis court space, whether they are using one or four pickleball courts. If they are not using all two / four pickleball courts, the rest would be available for walk-ons during that hour.
- *Additional thought: could you also add a field to CivicRec asking the user which of the three sports they are using the court for? This could be helpful data for determining usage levels. CivicRec appears to support the addition of custom fields.*

Action item: George said that this was an easy fix and could be implemented within days, including for the two Floyd Dryden courts prior to the reconfiguration. He said he would check with P&R staff to ensure that this is, indeed, an easy addition and would get back to Colleen and Lauren by the end of the week.

Clear signage:

George said they will post clear signage to help alleviate conflicts between user groups, including information about the reservation system, priorities for usage (i.e. which sports can use which courts), and court etiquette. He encouraged us to provide input on what the signage should say.

Action item: Colleen and Dave will research signage at mixed-use facilities they have visited in the lower 48, *vet their ideas through the two local USTA pros (Mona Mametsuka and Austin Stefanich)*, and provide input to George. They will provide this within two weeks (unless it is needed sooner). George and P&R will have final say on the wording.

Low-contrast lines on mixed-use courts:

We all agreed that pickleball and basketball lines on the mixed-use courts need to be painted in low-contrast color, following best practices. *We discussed this in the context of the Floyd Dryden courts, but I would also ask that the next time Cope Park lines get painted, they are also painted in a low-contrast color so the court can be used for tennis matches.*

Action item: Colleen and Lauren will research best practices and consult with the two local USTA tennis pros for their color suggestions. We will provide this information to P&R within two weeks (unless it is needed sooner).

New door in fence at Cope Park:

We discussed adding a new door in the fence to provide direct access to the far court at Cope Park to alleviate user-group conflicts and interruptions of play. Colby said this would be an easy fix that could be implemented soon, pending availability of the fence contractor.

Action item: Colleen and Dave will look into door placement practices at facilities they have used in the lower 48 (*and consult with local USTA pros*) and will provide this information to George and Colby within two weeks (unless it is needed sooner).

The master plan:

We discussed the master plan and how CBJ plans to build a dedicated pickleball facility at another site (*Renninger and/or Dimond Park?*). George and Colby said that once that facility is in place (likely in five years), the courts at Floyd Dryden will be converted back to two dedicated tennis courts.

Action item: *Colleen will keep this on the radar of the Juneau Tennis Community and will encourage them to continue to advocate for CBJ to keep this promise.*

