

Discussion topics from Sep 20, 2023 City Council Meeting

- **Council members' discussion related to proposal to clarify ordinance 107-35**
 - “Should there be further investigation into the pickleball noise issue?”
 - “Is this [pickleball noise issue] something the city needs to tackle or accept?”
 - “We need to get comment from residents”
 - “Is the noise issue something we should have the CRCRC look at as part of land use and residential zoning issues?”
 - Paraphrasing – is there a real difference in pickleball noise vs. other court sports?

Sport Courts

- **Pickleball noise:**

1. is a well-documented nuisance with evidence concerning the volume & pitch (references follow)
2. *is* substantially louder than other court sports (tennis, basketball)
3. devalues adjacent properties and is a source of lawsuits to try to protect property values
4. is a source of neighbor tension

- **Private residence sport court usage needs city regulation to ensure:**

1. Reasonable start/stop times and duration of play
2. Sensible court use restrictions:
 - a) is it acceptable to have a private club with 50+ members using a residential sport court facility on a daily basis?
 - b) is it acceptable to convert one residential tennis court into four pickleball courts where 16 people play simultaneously?
 - c) is 6:30am 5 days a week (M-F) a reasonable start time?

Pickleball Noise Issues: Why is it a Problem & What Can be Done to Overcome?

https://racketsportsworld.com/pickleball-noise-issues-why-is-it-a-problem-what-can-be-done-to-overcome/?expand_article=1

- pickleball average sounds [are] around **70 dBA**. This scale of sound measurement, is a weighted decibel scale which gives the relative loudness of sounds in air as perceived by the human ear.
- **Tennis**, for instance, gives out 40 dBA sounds, which makes it **eight times softer than pickleball sounds**
- Loudness is just one component. Another is frequency, also known as pitch. Higher frequencies can sound higher and sharper.

Shattered Nerves, Sleepless Nights: Pickleball Noise Is Driving Everyone Nuts

The New York Times Andrew Keh June 30, 2023

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/30/sports/pickleball-noise-complaints-lawsuits.html>

- **Noise Pollution:** America's fastest growing sport has also become one of its biggest nuisances. [Pickleball's ceaseless staccato has fueled fights and even lawsuits.](#)
- **Bob Unetich**, 77, a retired engineer and avid pickleball player, one of the **foremost authorities** on muffling the game:

"pickleball whacks from 100 feet away could reach **70 dBA**, similar to some vacuum cleaners, while everyday background noise outside typically tops off at a 'somewhat annoying 55'."
- sounds were even dissected last month at **Noise-Con 2023**, the annual conference of North American noise control professionals, which featured an **opening-night session** called "Pickleball Noise."
- [In addition to ball/paddle-strike noise]... the **court is small enough** that all four people playing doubles **can chat and trash talk at their leisure.**

Pickleball has a noise problem. He's trying to fix it

NPR.org Mia Venkat, Tinbete Ermyas June 9, 2023

<https://www.npr.org/2023/06/09/1181246866/pickleball-noise-problem-courts-bats-play>

- Before he was a pickleball lover, Unetich was an engineer. And when it comes to the noise problem, he gets it.
- "You can't take pop, pop, pop for 12 hours a day every day and remain sane," he told NPR.
- Pickleball is, like, the worst of both worlds. You know, **it's loud, and it's high-pitched**
- "And with that explosion [in growth of the game's popularity] came the lawsuits..."

Pickleball is exploding nationwide, but it all starts at home

Austin American-Statesman

Cedric Golden

Sun, Jul 9, 2023

<https://tinyurl.com/46fpam3a>

- “They have gathered to play pickleball, but two hours at **Corky Logue’s courts** reveal something deeper.... a beautiful grouping of **four courts** and the sound of paddles whacking...”
- “**meet each day at his home to play on his four pickleball courts**”
- “**Logue’s circle of friends is approaching 60 members**. He dutifully provides a weekly schedule for his **four courts**, and no-show will surely hear from the leader.”
- “**painting, repaving and new nets** came at a cost of \$11,000”
- “**More than 50 people formed a private pickleball club that plays daily at locations in Westlake, Rollingwood and Bee Cave.**”

3016 Hatley - Tennis Court circa 2016 (spring)



- No pickleball courts
- Occasional **tennis** usage only

3016 Hatley - Tennis & Pickleball Courts 2022 (winter)



- Tennis + 2 pickleball courts
- Daily private pickleball club usage

3016 Hatley - Tennis & Pickleball Courts 2023



- 4 pickleball courts
- Daily private pickleball club usage
- photo taken from Austin American Statesman feature article (July 7, 2023)

Request to City Council and/or appropriate committees

- Recognize that pickleball noise is a distinct/unique problem
- Clarify existing noise ordinances or author noise ordinance updates that provide clear rules for sensible sport court usage
- Codify usage rules or enforce existing rules that strike a reasonable balance between owners' sport court use/enjoyment and neighbors' rights not to be confronted with a nuisance
- Codify rules or enforce existing rules that support the fact that residential sport courts are not intended to be a membership or club use facility. **There's a difference between reasonable friends & family usage and league or club usage of a residential sport court.**