



Board of Commissioners Meeting Agenda Item Submittal

Item To Be Considered: **Pickleball Update and Funding Strategy Request**

Board Meeting Date: **April 14, 2026**

Prepared By: **Anna Stanley – Parks & Recreation Director**

Overview: To brief the Board of Commissioners on the pickleball project and the intent to pursue state and federal grant opportunities for multiple recreation capital projects to maximize funds.

Background

In FY 2024–25, the Town allocated **\$150,000** toward the development of dedicated pickleball courts in response to increasing demand and participation. As staff progressed through site evaluation and feasibility considerations, it became evident that the overall project scope, necessary infrastructure, and regulatory requirements would result in a **larger and more complex project than initially anticipated**.

Key factors contributing to the expanded scope include stormwater permitting requirements, impervious surface limitations at Municipal Park, environmental mitigation needs, and construction cost estimates associated with building regulation-level courts.

Project Expansion & Strategic Approach

Given the increased project scale, staff began evaluating opportunities to **combine multiple related recreation improvement projects into one comprehensive capital project**. This bundled approach strengthens grant competitiveness, improves cost efficiency, and delivers broader community benefit.

The combined project concept includes:

- **Dedicated pickleball courts**
- **Tennis court resurfacing** (planned within the next two years)
- **Skatepark conversion or renovation**
- **Playground replacement** (aging equipment nearing end of usable life)

Instead of advancing these projects independently, staff recommends packaging them together to create a cohesive recreation investment plan.

Grant Funding Strategy

To support this approach, staff intends to apply for two major grant programs:

- **Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)**
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**

Both programs require a **dollar-for-dollar local match**, making them well suited for leveraging existing and planned capital funding. By combining projects, the Town can:

Action: _____

- Maximize grant eligibility and potential award amounts
- Increase return on local investment
- Spread required matching funds across multiple improvements
- Deliver higher-impact recreation upgrades in a shorter timeframe

Benefits to the Town

This strategy allows Swansboro to:

- Address multiple aging recreational assets simultaneously
- Provide modern, high-demand amenities for residents and visitors
- Improve long-term maintenance efficiency
- Position the Town more competitively for grant funding
- Reduce the need for piecemeal future capital requests

Next Steps

Staff will continue refining cost estimates, phasing options, and funding plans and anticipates returning to the Board with:

- Decision to move forward with applying for grant funding
- Commitment to apply for LWCF by June 1, 2026, which initiates required planning, environmental reviews, and pre-application steps
- Issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a professional grant consultant to prepare both the PARTF and LWCF applications
- RFQ should be issued as soon as possible to be prepared for the June 1 start date
- Estimated consultant cost: approximately \$20,000

Background Attachment(s): *none*

Recommended Action: Board direction to proceed with grant preparation and consultant procurement to meet critical deadlines.