

“Thank you to everyone who wrote letters, who posted correspondence, who spoke to me and to other Councillors personally, and to those who came here tonight to have your say and to be heard. I appreciate your opinions and concerns and I am thankful that we live in a place that allows us all to be heard. I hear your frustration and I hear your anger. I also heard from the community that supports our decision and that includes pickleball players and residents.

The decision to close the Wain Road Pickleball Courts was not an easy one and it did not occur overnight. The previous Council wrestled with these same issues and they were not able to effect a satisfactory resolution. This is not an issue specific to North Saanich, other municipalities have had to make the same decision after multiple mitigation strategies have failed. To be clear, James Bay, which is in Victoria, Oak Bay, Delta and Ottawa have all closed courts. We are not the first to do this. The decision was made after trying to balance the needs of the whole community.

In 2017, when pickleball was relatively new, the pickleball courts were installed without fulsome community consultation and without an understanding of pickleball by Council. Since that time, existing residents affected by the courts have provided their concerns and mitigation strategies have been put in place. Hours were implemented to satisfy the needs of pickleball players and the residents. The courts were continually used outside of these hours, so staff had to attend to close them. Closing the courts was not respected so locks were applied, and the locks were cut off. In some instances, when staff attended to close the courts, they experienced disrespectful behaviours, so Council at the time requested to hire a security firm. The security firm did not have capacity, so the courts were closed by multiple staff to ensure their safety. The cost for dealing with the non-compliance by having staff close the courts was \$9,000 for six weeks.

Softballs were mandated, players refused to use them. Soft paddles were suggested, and pickle ball players said that they would not play with them. Residents have received harassing emails, phone calls, have been sworn at and yelled at, and have had people trespass on their property because they have spoken out about the noise. Discussions have been taking place over the last one and a half years for alternate locations, Blue Heron being one. The pickleball community has declined this location as it is too close to the highway and they will hear highway noise. YYJ has been declined as it is too close to the airport. Tulista, pickleball players declined this location as they have concerns about playing near the ocean as playing near the ocean will affect the ball with wind interference. Cy Hampson, pickle ball players and non-pickle ball players objected to this location.

Sound mitigation costs \$90,000. Other communities that have used sound mitigation have found additional measures were necessary. Courts are available in North Saanich, there are other places to play here, including Panorama Recreation Centre and in neighbouring municipalities. Work is being done to ensure there are additional courts available. Council has asked the Peninsula Recreation Commission to review possible solutions and locations. Additional court locations are being considered using a Peninsula lens that involves municipalities we share borders with to ensure a solution that respects both residents and pickleball players. It is a solution for the entire community. Thank you.”