

https://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/opinion/columnists/sutherland-passing-the-pickleball-buck-to-staff/article_98262843-d56c-5c4d-a017-cd50ae4113ca.html

Home / Opinion / Columnists

COLUMNISTS

OPINION

Sutherland: Passing the pickleball buck to staff

“There seems to be absolutely no consideration for the comfort, mental or physical health of the residents who will have to live with that penetrating noise.”

By Sylvia Sutherland

May 21, 2024

Article was updated 14 hrs ago



More than 250 concerned residents attend a rally to save Bonnerworth Park in Peterborough on Saturday. The Peterborough park is slated for \$4.4 million development, including 16 pickleball courts. Clifford Skarstedt Metroland photo

You would think that 4,500 people (and counting) signing a petition against the development of 16 pickleball courts at Bonnerworth Park might grab the attention of council.

But no. Despite Coun. Joy Lachica's effort to get the site plan and the relevant noise, traffic, lighting, parking, storm water management and geotechnical reports before council ahead of any construction proceeding, the entire project remains solely in the hands of city staff. That's where council placed it a couple of weeks ago, potentially washing their hands of the whole prickly issue.

What is it they really don't want to know, or the public to know, before the ball diamonds are torn up and the grass paved over for parking?

As soon as Lachica's notice of motion came up on the general committee's agenda last week, committee chair Andrew Beamer said he would allow her to read it "and then give my ruling."

You knew right away the fix was in.

Beamer's ruling was that Lachica's motion was out of order because it was "contrary to the direction previously provided by council."

Hammering the final nail into the coffin, he added, "Once the chair rules and the motion is out of order, there is no debate."

Beamer did point out that Lachica could challenge the chair.

Which she was in the process of doing when Coun. Lesley Parnell interrupted her midsentence, complaining that Lachica was straying from procedural reasons why she thought her motion was in order.

Beamer agreed.

"I'd just like to finish my sentence," Lachica shot back. Beamer let her.

In fact, she managed to squeeze in two sentences.

"If 16 courts were to be installed 50 meters from any of our homes we would want to know the measures in place to assuage our fear and uncertainty of a new normal.

"If this is the will of council — to see the site plan and technical studies before work commences — a motion to request this is certainly in order."

On a vote of 6-5, council supported Beamer's ruling. In favour of allowing Lachica's motion to go forward were Lachica, and councillors Alex Bierk, Keith Riel, Matt Crowley, and Dave Haacke.

Frankly, it was a shameful abdication of responsibility on the part of the others. Lachica was simply asking that council have more information, including costs, before work began.

Costs — now there's a rub. A tad over \$2 million is budgeted for the pickleball courts. Construction is to begin this fall. Next year, another \$2.4 million is assigned to be spent to expand the existing skateboard park and install a bike pump track. If I were a skateboard or bike pump enthusiast, I'd be worried.

The city has no idea of how much it is going to cost to mitigate the "obnoxiously loud" noise from the courts, if in fact that's even possible. Then, there is all the other necessary work currently without a price tag. Any overrun will have to come from somewhere.

The most shameful thing of all is that there seems to be absolutely no consideration for the comfort, mental or physical health of the residents who will have to live with that penetrating noise. This includes the seniors at Marycrest at Inglewood and the occupants of Hunt Terrace, both within shouting distance of the proposed courts.

Never mind the environmental costs to which no figure can be assigned.

It really seems to be a case of "my mind is made up; don't confuse me with the facts."



Sylvia Sutherland was Peterborough's mayor from 1985 to 1991 and from 1997 to 2006.

REPORT AN ERROR

JOURNALISTIC STANDARDS

**ABOUT THE
EXAMINER**
