

https://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/news/council/videographer-captures-neighbours-ire-over-pickleball-development-for-youtube-documentary/article_f536067d-3231-5194-b7b5-ef66071b803e.html

Home / News / City Council

CITY COUNCIL

Videographer captures neighbours ire over pickleball development for YouTube documentary

Mark Woollard interviewed nine concerned citizens for video that is now online.

By **Joelle Kovach** Reporter

May 23, 2024

Article was updated 6 hrs ago



Clifford Skarstedt Metroland

Organizer Father Leo Coughlin, a retired priest, addresses more than 250 concerned residents who attended a rally to save Bonnerworth Park in Peterborough on Saturday. The Peterborough park is slated for a \$4.4-million development, including 16 pickleball courts.



A citizen movement to keep Bonnerworth Park's green space from being paved over for 16 new pickleball courts is gaining momentum as people "wake up" to the issue, says retired priest Father Leo Coughlin.

"We are the voice of Bonnerworth!" he told more than 250 people gathered in the park for a rally on Saturday. "Show them we are a force to be reckoned with!"

Save Bonnerworth Park - The First Rally



Coughlin, who lives across Monaghan Road at Marycrest at Inglewood Seniors' Residence, was the rally organizer.

Key moments of the rally, plus interviews with nine concerned residents of Marycrest, were all captured by Brampton videographer Mark Woollard, who has family ties to Peterborough.

On Thursday, Woollard posted to his Facebook page and to [his YouTube channel](#) a new 12-minute film that documents the rally.

In the film, Coughlin says it's environmentally unfriendly to replace grass with pickleball courts.

"To pave over green space, in the 21st century, is a big regression," he says.

Bonnerworth Park is located along Monaghan Road at McDonnell Street. It now has baseball diamonds, green space, four tennis courts (converted for pickleball use) and a skateboard facility.

In April, city council voted a final time to redevelop the park to add new amenities. The plan includes a new specialized bike track, upgrades for the 20-year-old skateboard area and 16 new pickleball courts.

Construction is expected to start in fall, with the pickleball courts. The rest of the redevelopment will take place in 2025. The entire project is expected to cost \$4.4 million.

Pickleball players have told city council they are pleased. Coun. Lesley Parnell, the parks co-chair, has said it would take 36 courts to satisfy demand for the fast-growing sport in Peterborough.

However, many neighbours have told city council they don't want the green space in the park largely paved over for the courts, and that they weren't consulted by the city. They're also concerned about the potential for noise generated by pickleball.

Look at the health benefits, Mayor Jeff Leal has said. He mentioned at a recent council meeting that the city is trying to offer a new way for people to get active and healthy.

But seniors living at Marycrest at Inglewood say they see it differently, that the noise from pickleball poses a threat to their health.

Carolyn Golloher, whose unit at Marycrest faces Monaghan Road, says in the film that she expects pickleball noise will keep her awake. She goes to bed early, and pickleball is expected to go on until late.

“It’s going to be horrible, trying to get some sleep,” she says in the film. “Who wants to wear earplugs all night?”

And it’s not just the seniors who are concerned. Evelyn Gerelus, 27, is a local teacher who grew up near the park on Middleton Drive, spoke at the rally.

“It’s hard to have hope and confidence in the leaders of our community — let alone our province and our country — when they do not listen to the values of the majority,” Gerelus says in the film.

Meanwhile, city parks co-chair Coun. Gary Baldwin listened in the city hall parking lot, following a council meeting on Tuesday evening, as nine people who had been protesting the park plans approached him with questions.

Protesters asked why they hadn’t been consulted on the city’s plan.

“I’ll be the first to admit — we should have done a better job with consultation,” Baldwin told them.

But he then added he expects public meetings to show the site plans prior to construction of the pickleball courts this fall.

In the film, park neighbour Richard Scott encourages people to show up to these future meetings, and to continue speaking up in the meantime.

“It is not over yet,” Scott says.

The film of the rally can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Tx6VAeQI-A.



Joelle Kovach is the City Hall reporter for the Peterborough Examiner.

REPORT AN ERROR

JOURNALISTIC STANDARDS

**ABOUT THE
EXAMINER**