

# Peterborough Baseball Association not consulted about Bonnerworth pickleball plan: president

'The city isn't listening ... The truth is we don't have enough diamonds in Peterborough'.

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More than 250 concerned residents, including a pair of baseball players, attended a rally to save Bonnerworth Park in Peterborough on May 18.

Clifford Skarstedt Metroland

By **Mike Davies** Examiner Sports Director

The Peterborough Baseball Association (PBA) is upset by the lack of consultation on the Bonnerworth Park redevelopment, which will cost it three diamonds when there's already a shortage, said president Clayton Wade.

In addition to the two diamonds at Bonnerworth, the diamond at Knights of Columbus Park on Park Street will also be lost when tennis courts are built there to replace the ones being displaced by the controversial plan to construct 16 pickleball courts at Bonnerworth, said Wade.

Wade said there has been a lot of misinformation in the public comments made surrounding the development pertaining to ball diamonds.

"I'd like to dispel some myths," said Wade. "Bonnerworth diamonds are not poor quality. They are the best in town if you exclude the diamonds with lights and fences."

Wade said the association has lost three diamonds at Morrow Park with the construction of a twin-pad arena there and also one diamond at the former Northcrest Arena. Eliminating three more diamonds with no plan to replace them and without ever consulting the users doesn't sit well, he said.

"It feels like, and I think I'm not alone, that the city isn't listening," said Wade. "The information the people get about the Bonnerworth baseball diamonds isn't really accurate either. The truth is we don't have enough diamonds in Peterborough."

He said they learned about the Bonnerworth redevelopment in August 2023 when the pickleball community revealed the redevelopment plan. Despite what some councillors say, he said the PBA was never consulted.

"We found out through the grapevine and it was all a done deal," he said. "The Peterborough Baseball Association was not consulted on Bonnerworth redevelopment."

Among the PBA's 600 house league and rep players, those aged eight to 11 are too small to use fields like Riverside Park and Trent University, but too big to play on softball diamonds.

Diamonds on school properties are meant for softball and are too small for PBA needs, yet, the association has been using them due to the lack of alternatives. Many diamonds on school properties are simply unusable due to a lack of maintenance, he said.

A report states the city is upgrading two softball diamonds to meet baseball's needs, helping to replace the diamonds lost at Bonnerworth. However, Wade says the PBA has already been using those fields, so the upgrades do not add to the 20-plus diamonds they already use.

"Improvements to other diamonds will not solve the problem," he said. "The PBA asked for larger infields last year because we do not have enough diamonds like Bonnerworth. At the moment, many of our house league games are played on diamonds that are much too small. These tiny diamonds are booked every weekday, so how will making them larger solve the lack of diamonds?"

"They just continue to get rid of diamonds and they haven't really committed to adding any which is frustrating."

Wade said groups like church league softball and slo-pitch, along with their house league have booked existing fields solid Monday through Thursday, so there is no room available to move the existing users of Bonnerworth and Knights of Columbus.

The city's recreation department suggested scheduling fields between 4-6 p.m., but it's not a popular idea as many parents' work hours conflict, said Wade.

He said house league and softball users don't want to move games to weekends, preferring to keep that as family time. Rep teams are used to playing on weekends for tournaments, but league games and practices aren't practical at those times.

“It’s true a lot of diamonds lay empty, but the truth is people want to do it through the week and on evenings,” he said.

Either adult groups will get displaced by youth field requests or users will be forced to move out of town.

“I’d say it’s already starting to happen,” said Wade.



**Mike Davies** is a sports director and reporter at the Peterborough Examiner, based in Peterborough.

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