

CITY COUNCIL

Mayor responds to Catholic board letter regarding concerns with pickleball development

Board is in fact getting new facilities for its students, said Jeff Leal.

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Residents carry placards during a pickleball development protest on Saturday, July 20.

Clifford Skarstedt Metroland

By Joelle Kovach Reporter

Students of the local Catholic school board will soon be learning to play pickleball in Bonnerworth Park, predicts Peterborough Mayor Jeff Leal.

Leal mentions it in a new letter to Kevin MacKenzie, chair of the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board.

MacKenzie had written to Leal on June 27, to express “disappointment” in what he describes as the city’s lack of consultation with the school board on redevelopment plans for Bonnerworth Park, at McDonnel Street and Monaghan Road.

About 200 students of the nearby St. Peter’s Catholic Secondary School use the Bonnerworth tennis courts and baseball diamonds “daily,” through the spring and fall, MacKenzie writes, for outdoor physical education

instruction.

Yet the tennis courts and ball diamonds are about to be edged out by 16 pickleball courts. The city plans to move tennis courts to Knights of Columbus Park on Park Street, plus upgrade other city ball diamonds.

In his response from July 11, Leal writes that the board is in fact getting new facilities for its students to use.

“The City of Peterborough is aware that teachers in your board, when the redevelopment is completed, will take students to Bonnerworth (Park) to learn to participate in the sport of pickleball,” Leal writes.

The city’s planned two-year, \$4.4-million redevelopment of the park is expected to begin this fall, with construction of 16 pickleball courts.

Next year, it’s expected that a new pump bike track will be added, and that upgrades to the existing skateboarding area will take place.

MacKenzie writes that in addition to outdoor physical education classes, hundreds more student athletes from St. Peter’s use Bonnerworth Park for sports through spring and fall – rugby, soccer and field lacrosse teams train there, for example.

St. Peter’s further uses the park to host regional tennis tournaments and baseball tournaments, MacKenzie writes.

He adds in his letter that while the board understands the city is trying “to balance the needs” of a variety of park users, trustees remain “disappointed about how the city conducted its consultation.”

In his response, Leal writes that he expects Catholic school board students to learn to play pickleball in the park, plus lists seven available green spaces within 1.3 km of Bonnerworth Park.

Leal mentions green space at Hamilton Park, Queen Mary Elementary School, St. Peter’s Catholic Secondary School, St. Teresa’s and Westmount elementary schools, Wedgewood Park and Jackson Park.

Meanwhile, the school board is not alone in expressing concern about the consultation process related to the park redevelopment. Many neighbours have said they weren’t consulted either.

Some residents said they didn’t know about the redevelopment until the planned layout of the park was unveiled at a public meeting, March 21. Final approval from council came at a meeting April 9.

Several neighbours said they are concerned about the noise that will be generated by pickleball. As of earlier this month, neighbours said more than 7,400 signatures had been collected on petitions – either online petitions, or in hard copy – urging the city to stop the redevelopment.

Leal was not available for comment, for this article.

When asked if indeed the Catholic board students will use the park to learn pickleball, MacKenzie said in an email: “We have a strong relationship with the city and partner with them on a variety of outdoor recreational

uses. In this case, the Board of Trustees felt that it was important to let city councillors know that we had pertinent information with respect to how often our students use Bonnerworth Park.

“We believe that there was not enough consultation in regard to our specific use of Bonnerworth Park, and the impact that this will have on students needed to be mentioned. Our students will continue to play pickleball and a variety of other sports in each of our schools.”



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

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