

Pickleball Moose Jaw
Outdoor Court Proposal
November 1, 2021

Executive Summary

Pickleball Moose Jaw (PMJ) have worked with City staff to identify a location for outdoor pickleball courts in Moose Jaw. Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in North America. Presently there are no public outdoor courts in the city; outdoor courts would be used by local players and for tournaments drawing visitors to the city.

After evaluating options for sites, PMJ identified a site to the south of the Kinsmen Area as a good location for 6 (to be expanded to 12) courts. This site has access to an existing sports facility (change rooms, washrooms, concession, first aid etc.) and parking and is well protected from wind.

PMJ has received cost estimates: For work including site preparation, gravel, concrete, surface painting, lines and nets and fencing estimated costs are about \$285,000 for a 6-court facility and \$558,000 for a 12-court facility. PMJ is prepared to work with the City reach an agreement to develop and manage outdoor pickleball courts for the benefit of the people of the City.

Background

Pickleball is a fun and fast-paced sport, accessible to all. It helps build active, healthy communities. Pickleball promotes positive social interaction and enhances participants' physical and mental health. Pickleball as a sport strives to be welcoming, accessible and safe; to be equitable, diverse and inclusive. This has led it to be the fastest growing sport in the world. Saskatchewan 'Snowbirds' learned to play pickleball in the southern United States and brought their love of the game home, along with the desire to play for more than a few months in the winter. In typical Saskatchewan style, volunteerism was the key to success in establishing pickleball throughout the province. The first pickleball program in Regina was started at the Glencairn Recreation Centre in 2006. It was followed in short order by programs in schools, churches and other community centres throughout the city. Pickleball is now played every day of the week in multiple locations in Regina by over 1,000 people.

The early days of pickleball in Saskatoon began with weekly games in 2007 at Father Basil Markle Park, with hand marked lines on existing tennis courts. In 2008 the sport was further organized, grown and supported by community groups. From its modest beginnings, the Saskatoon pickleball community has now grown to include over 1,000 regular players. Rural and smaller communities organized pickleball clubs on their own or by partnering with other nearby centres. Informal competitions are enjoyed across the province. All sizes of communities have worked hard to create outdoor courts through grants and volunteerism.

Pickleball Saskatchewan Inc. (PSI) was incorporated as a non-profit membership corporation in 2013. Its first affiliated clubs were Pickleball Regina Inc. and Saskatoon Pickleball Inc. in 2017. As of the end of 2020, there are 18 affiliated clubs and 1,571 members of Pickleball Saskatchewan. In addition to the strong growth in enthusiastic members, PSI is very proud to have pickleball recognized as an emerging sport by Sask Sport in 2020. This designation acknowledges Pickleball Saskatchewan's role in developing and growing the sport of pickleball in the province and provides access to funding as an affiliate of Sask Sport. It is PSI's desire to have all pickleball players in the province realize the benefits of becoming a member of Pickleball Saskatchewan, and thereby of Pickleball Canada. (From Pickleball Saskatchewan Strategic Plan)

An estimated 60,000 people play pickleball in Canada. Pickleball Moose Jaw (PMJ) has been incorporated for 2 years and, despite the limitations of COVID, has over 50 members. As a new organization PMJ is working to promote the sport through advocacy for facilities and by encouraging new members. Membership benefits include personal health and liability insurance, access to sanctioned tournaments and other events and opportunity to support the sport. As the organization is growing and gathering members, it is estimated that there are more than 300 pickleball players in Moose Jaw and area.

Present Situation in Moose Jaw

Before the COVID pandemic the City of Moose Jaw coordinated the use of several school gyms for pickleball during the winter months. In addition, the sport was played at 15 Wing Moose Jaw. The Eaton's Centre and Cosmo Centre opened their facilities for pickleball, for senior players who became members of those groups. By the fall of 2020 the school gyms were closed to community use and Eaton's and Cosmo operated until closed by provincial order in the fall. Reopening of facilities in the summer of 2021 allowed players (mostly restricted to senior players) to return to the Eaton's and Cosmo facilities although only 2 courts at each facility are available. There was no City coordinated pickleball in the first 8 month of 2021, but recently indoor play resumed in school gyms. There are no public outdoor pickleball venues in Moose Jaw despite that being the predominate way that pickleball is played in warm weather conditions.

One of the issues with the current situation is that, unless a player is a member of PMJ or has their own policy, the individual has no insurance coverage for specific injury or liability. This is one of the major benefits in membership in PMJ.

Locations Considered

PMJ has considered several options to locate outdoor pickleball courts:

- PMJ has had discussion with the Moose Jaw Tennis Club on the possible joint use of tennis courts in Crescent Park. Pickleball uses the same type of surface as tennis and can

coexist on the same facility with some cooperation and coordination. There would appear to be an opportunity for this sharing of facilities to take place, but the Tennis Club has not indicated a willingness to proceed. While in the future a sharing of this facility may be possible, it is not imminent.

- SaskPolytechnic at one time had tennis courts for students in the area north of MacDonald Street. Preliminary discussions with their facilities staff were not fruitful and it does not seem that joint use of this area would be likely in the near future.
- It has been suggested that the old skating rink near old Ross School (Willow Avenue) would be a good location for outdoor courts. There are light standards at the site and a building that houses washroom facilities. PMJ and City staff have investigated and have found problems with this location. Concerns include parking, size of the site, proximity to residential areas (noise) and lack of protection from wind. It was also felt that this location would not be ideal for tournaments which could draw upwards of 100 people.
- There are several areas in Crescent Park that could accommodate pickleball courts including the site of the former YMCA. Crescent Park would be an excellent location given it's picturesque setting and location close to downtown. While there are other sports venues in the area (outdoor pool, tennis and lawn bowling) it was felt that drawbacks include lack of public washrooms and lack of parking. It was also thought that there could be community resistance to an expansion of facilities in the park.
- PMJ looked at the park area south of Kinsmen Sportsplex and found it meets most of the needs for an outdoor court including, parking, existing support features (bathroom facilities, concession, first aid resources, meeting rooms and reception available in the Kinsmen Sportsplex facility), protection from wind (trees on the south and the rink/pool on the north), and opportunity for a staged development plan. This site is also in an area which includes outdoor and indoor recreation use and is relatively distanced from residential uses. Sufficient space exists immediately south of the Kinsmen Arena.

Proposed Option

PMJ propose developing outdoor pickleball courts in the park south of the Kinsmen Sportsplex (see attached conceptual plans). The initial phase would include 6 courts with options to increase the facility to up to 12 courts in the future if demand warrants. Construction would include site preparation and drainage (remove topsoil and place graded granular material) and a concrete surface with appropriate surface drainage. The concrete would be painted with a paint containing silica (standard outdoor surface) and pickleball line markings would be applied. Fencing would be placed behind the courts (10 feet high) and along the sides (4 feet high). The facility would be designed to be able to accommodate sanctioned tournaments. From discussions with players from other communities, there is an opportunity to market Moose Jaw as a Pickleball friendly destination for travelers. Also, sanctioned tournaments are a significant draw for travellers (typically at least 12 courts would be required for a tournament). City officials suggested that savings could be realized by moving light standards from

decommissioned park areas in the city. The design for this facility would consider the option to expand it to include more courts, lighting and court side seating.

PMJ is prepared to work with the City to develop a plan to construct and manage the usage of the facility. Options that could be considered include:

City Funded Courts / City Operated Courts

In this option the City of Moose Jaw would fully fund the building of outdoor pickleball courts and facilitate their use. User groups, such as PMJ, would be able to rent court time to offer their own programming and any un-used time would provide free open play time for community members.

Joint Funding & Use Agreement between City & PMJ

In this scenario PMJ would contribute to the cost of building outdoor pickleball courts, with the City of Moose Jaw subsidizing the project. PMJ would commit to fundraising and would work independently and with the city on grant funding options. PMJ would be granted use of the courts for a determined amount of time, with the remainder of the time being open to community use.

PMJ Funded & Operated

With this option PMJ would provide the full cost of building outdoor courts and fully manage their use. PMJ would request space from the City of Moose Jaw on which to build as well as accommodations on utilities. At this time, it is unlikely that PMJ would be able to provide full payment for the cost of outdoor courts and would request a loan from the City in order to move ahead with the project.

PMJ feels strongly about providing the community with access to outdoor pickleball courts without the need for a costly membership. Pickleball is a sport for all, and free access will benefit the community immensely.

Any combination of these options is a possibility. PMJ is committed to moving this project forward and dedicated to the growth of the sport in our community. In order to maximize growth, we believe a combination of free and open court time with PMJ facilitated programming is best.

Financial Implications

PMJ has approached suppliers and contractors to obtain estimates for the cost of constructing both a 6 and 12 court facility. These are estimates only; final costs would be more accurate when drawings and site details are available. Also, it is possible that in-kind work and/or use of City resources could impact the costs. For work including site preparation, gravel, concrete,

surface painting, lines and nets and fencing estimated costs are about \$285,000 for a 6-court facility and \$558,000 for a 12-court facility.

As this is a preliminary proposal PMJ would like to work with City staff to fine tune the works being considered, the capital costs and the appropriate cost sharing formulae as well as the way the facility would be managed and time allocated.

Recommendation

PMJ would like to work with City Staff to finalize plans to proceed with the first phase of development of outdoor pickleball court south of the Kinsmen Sportsplex with the objective to have the courts in use by the fall of 2022. Once agreement in principle has been reached to proceed with this project, PMJ and the City can work to finalize the budget, cost sharing and management details. The first phase should be able to accommodate expansion as outlined above. After 2 years the usage patterns would be reviewed, and a decision made on the timing of expansion.



