

## FRIENDS OF BAYVIEW PARK

### PRESS RELEASE

## **THORNBURY PICKLEBALL DECISION SHROUDED IN SECRECY No Community Consultation for \$160,000 Project**

**Thornbury ON, October 15, 2019** — The Town of the Blue Mountains' decision to construct Pickleball Courts on the green space in Bayview Park in Thornbury has sparked a protest by many local residents. The Town's decision to build four pickleball courts and paved parking lot on the green space amidst residential homes has raised a number of concerns. Residents only found out about the town's decision by word of mouth. No consultations with local homeowners were held prior to the decision and budget approval for the courts. Nor was there any communication by the town to residents about the impending construction which is slated to take almost a year to complete.

"With Pickleball's popularity taking off, there is no doubt that there will be enthusiastic participation on these courts, not only with the local pickleball club, but also with the general public," said Jayne Sutherland spokesperson for 'Friends of Bayview Park'. "We have nothing against pickleball, per se," said Sutherland. "It has taken off with older adults because it is less physically punishing than tennis, is easy to learn and is a great venue for socializing." However, in communities across North America there has been a backlash by angry residents against pickleball courts triggering lawsuits, tense community relations and decreasing property values.

With the sport's hard paddles, plastic balls and truncated courts, unlike tennis, it produces a constant barrage of high frequency noise, that is especially attuned to our ears. (Acoustiblok). In many cases this has resulted in courts being relocated, lawsuits being launched or expensive noise abatement measures such as acoustic fencing being installed.

"Our house is just one of many surrounding the green space where the pickleball courts are supposed to go," said local homeowner Laurie Condie. "We have been advised by a real estate professional that this will definitely decrease our property value. The peace and quiet we currently enjoy will be shattered."

Resident Tom Kritsch said, "as a new homeowner across from Bayview Park, I welcome events such as 'Music By the Bay' and those renting the park pavilion. They make the park a dynamic, interactive place but importantly, are of limited duration. As residents we shouldn't have to put up with the pervasive, non-stop clatter of pickleball courts."

Traffic and parking are also concerns for residents. The only access in and out of the Bayview Park area is via an increasingly busy Highway 26. "As residents we accept the fact that Highway 26 traffic in ever popular Thornbury is inevitable, but why add to this worsening bottleneck when a location south of the highway could disburse traffic across multiple routes", said Thornbury homeowner, Sandy Macauley.

With four pickleball and two tennis courts in full use, there could be up to 24 players each with cars needing parking at any one time and this doesn't factor in those waiting to play. The Town wants to pave part of the green space and potentially make this the first pay parking lot in Thornbury. "We treasure the uniqueness of our town," said Sutherland. She added "Part of the charm of our village is that it doesn't have the usual plethora of box stores, retail chains, fast food strips and paid parking. Paving over this green space will be an 'urban eyesore' in our picturesque town."

The Town of the Blue Mountains considered three locations for the pickleball courts: Bayview Park, the Beaver Valley Community Centre (BVCC) precinct and Tomahawk Golf and Recreational Complex. "We were told by the Town that the BVCC area was rejected because of its proximity to local residents and the Tomahawk complex was not chosen because of its portable toilets. "What we don't understand", said Sutherland, "is why pickleball is unacceptable in the BVCC residential area and acceptable in another residential area, namely Bayview Park. The ideal solution would be Tomahawk. It is in a non-residential area, with plenty of room and has existing, cost-saving parking. "Perhaps seasonal toilet facilities like the kiosk by the children's playground at Bayview Park could be built for minimal cost with savings from the parking lot", said Sutherland.

The decision and budget approval for the location and \$160,000 cost took place at the Town of the Blue Mountains' 2019 budget deliberations. There was no opportunity for resident consultation or input on this specific issue. As well, the Town has said that because all three locations are already zoned recreational there was no statutory obligation for the Town to communicate at all with residents about the location or the commencement of construction.

Some have said that this is a 'mostly tax free' project. Of the \$160,000 cost, 90% is coming from the Development Charges Fund and 10% from taxpayers. Importantly though, the Development Charges Act is there to offset the cost of growth-related infrastructure of new development in lieu of increasing property taxes. These funds can be used for projects such as water, sewer and roads as well as as recreational facilities and libraries. "But our purpose is not to dictate where this money is spent; everyone's priorities are different. However, spending a substantial amount on a specific recreational project deserves to be discussed in public", Sutherland said.

Sutherland concluded, "We share the belief that pickleball courts will encourage residents to have fun in the fresh air and get healthy exercise and is a laudable goal. But we are simply calling on the Town of the Blue Mountains to delay construction, communicate with all residents and seek public input to ensure that the best location for pickleball courts for *all* residents of Thornbury is chosen".

On behalf of concerned residents, Jayne Sutherland will be making a deputation at the Town of the Blue Mountains Council Meeting on Monday, October 21, 2019, starting at 7 p.m. The council meeting is being held off-site at the Village Conference Centre, Petun Room, Blue Mountain Resort, 242 Jozo Weider Blvd. Media and the public are welcome to attend.

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