

## Roxanne Maher

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**From:** Naomi Rodriguez  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 12, 2024 11:26 AM  
**To:** Roxanne Maher  
**Subject:** Fw: Pickleball/Playgrounds

Hi Roxanne,

Could you please put this on the communications list.

Thank you,

Naomi

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**From:** Andy Parad <aparad@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 7, 2024 10:09 PM  
**To:** Scott Johnson <Scott@ledyardct.org>  
**Cc:** Fred Allyn, III <mayor@ledyardct.org>; Naomi Rodriguez <NaomiR@ledyardct.org>  
**Subject:** Pickleball/Playgrounds

Scott,

Thanks for having the foresight to gather community members for a meeting. This was very helpful.

I am going to put the bottom line up front for pickleball (and probably too many words below). After attending the meeting tonight, stopping by the tee-ball field on East drive on the way home, and having a chance to think about it, I am personally opposed to the idea of building 2 or 3 pickleball courts at that location. Here are the reasons:

1. The field is smaller than I remember. I am not sure there will be enough room left for tee-ball
2. Having coached on that field for about 5 years I will tell you
  - a. You need more room for tee-ball than you would think. My thought as I was sitting in the parking lot was that the only place pickleball would fit here was in the parking lot.
  - b. Often older siblings use the field for batting practice before/after practice and younger kids just run around
  - c. The mosquitos there were a problem. People will want to play in the early morning and late afternoon. The shade will be nice, as will the wind blocking of the trees. But the flying insects could be an issue that could minimize use
3. The location is remote. I know the neighbors want something there, but I'm not sure this is the best site to showcase Ledyard
4. Someone at the meeting brought up drainage and this effecting any slab put down. I don't remember puddles in the outfield being a problem, though we canceled anytime there was even the chance of a sprinkle. But it does seem like a low lying location
5. The Gales Ferry TeamReach group probably plays more than anyone and I think 4 to 12 people typically show up. Here is my experience playing at Old Saybrook where they built 3 very nice courts.

Essentially we stopped playing there because we weren't guaranteed a court. Instead the few times I've made it that way, we now play at Trask which is a tennis court with lines and we bring a net. We have never tried to play at Stonington because of the same issue. It's only 2 courts. So really, in my opinion, building 2 or even 3 courts will mostly be for the most recreational people who play less and cause frustration amongst the regulars. Windham got it right with 6 courts. They have regular groups of 8 to 12 that come out and use 2 or 3 courts, but there are still courts for the rest of us who show up. I think the Gales Ferry group for the most part would still play at the tennis court is what will end up happening depending on group size/risk tolerance. The converse could also happen where the regulars dominate the courts and recreational players won't be able to play which is counter to what the goal should be as well.

6. Hearing the cost involved I think I understand why every town has done this wrong. They have a budget for funds to use, they use those funds...and don't build enough courts. Yes, you can add more courts later, if needed. But if you know you will need more courts, this seems to be an expensive mistake

#### Some suggestions

1. We think critically about the number of courts and where to put them. Don't build too few courts in the wrong place because of budgeting. Maybe 2 years of funds could be combined.
2. Talk with the Board of Ed and develop a plan for the town. I played with some UConn players a few weeks ago. Pickleball went from a club sport to a team sport in just the last few years. They will be playing at the national tournament, I think in Indiana, in the spring. A few years ago there were about 30 teams, 64 this year, and my guess would be over 100 in the spring. There is a very high likelihood this will turn into a fall sport at the high school level. To spend so much money and not take this into account would be a mistake. Maybe we still build courts in Gales Ferry even though we know the high school will need courts in the next 3 to 10 years. But there should be a plan and I didn't hear a plan tonight which for such a large expenditure and I was hoping for that.
3. I believe the difference between asphalt and post tension concrete was about \$20,000, or about 25% higher. I believe this is the company that has a 20 year warranty: [Connecticut Tennis & Basketball Court Construction | Classic Turf Company](#). Given that it's going to cost, I believe you said \$59,000 Scott, to resurface the tennis and basketball courts, the small upfront additional cost for post tension concrete from a reputable company seems like a no brainer.
4. Thinking outside the box, how much is the tennis court in Gales Ferry used for tennis, and is there another court elsewhere? Would a portion of the \$59,000 for resurfacing be better put toward pickleball (or playgrounds). If the tennis court were removed, would there be room for 4 pickleball courts (which I would probably consider the minimum) given the zoning and easement issues. Just considering all our options here
5. To go back to the high school, I would think there would be concerns about pickleball courts at the high school for public use. How do other schools deal with this? How does the high school deal with the tennis courts and are they used during school hours? I can see the argument of nuisance noise. But I can also see the benefit of having additional "good" people at the high school. The fear of school shootings is a reality. I can't see having a bunch of old people milling about being anything but a positive in this unfortunate equation.

As for playgrounds, I have much less experience there, but saw what playgrounds could be during our 7 months in New Zealand. They were community gathering places. Places for kids to get exercise. Places the kids actually wanted to go to. The most similar place around here is Poquonnock Plains. There are diverse attractions that aren't static like the typical playground. Personally, I divide playgrounds into

those that are for imaginative play and those that are for adventure play. New Zealand I think has it right that they have leaned into adventure play. As you pointed out, I'm not sure how much of this is "legal" here. I've created a drop box with some pictures:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eR8dBk2LiaeTAg3nBmiP67wqXGhUusV5?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eR8dBk2LiaeTAg3nBmiP67wqXGhUusV5?usp=drive_link)

The unnamed pictures are from Governors Island in NY. In short I would say let's not replace our 1970s playgrounds with 1970s playgrounds.

I hope this information helps.

Andy