First off, let me say that I and I believe most of the residents I’m speaking for, have no bone to pick with pickleball. As you probably all know, it’s a fast growing, very popular recreational sport. It has especially taken off with older adults because it is not as punishing as tennis, does not need years to become proficient at and is an excellent venue for socializing.

All that being said, I would like to touch on a few issues of concern to some of the residents in the Town of the Blue Mountains regarding the construction of four pickleball courts on the green space beside the tennis courts at Bayview Park.

As you can see from the slide, I have grouped them into 5 topics:

1. **Noise**
2. **Traffic / Parking**
3. **Cost**
4. **Consultation / Communications**
5. **Loss of Green Space**

1. **Noise**

As you can see from the slide, here are some comments about pickleball noise in other communities. [attributable quotes from other media and organizations]

As the popularity of the game grows and it expands into more municipalities, pickleball noise has become a contentious issue in communities across North America. This has led to petitions, outcries in the media, law suits and expensive and prohibitive noise abatement strategies. The noise is so pervasive and irritating that in many areas property values have been negatively affected. Even for those not living directly near the courts, for those of us who walk in the Bayview Park environs every day, the incessant clatter of pickleball courts would be a very unwelcome disruption to the relative peacefulness and ambience of the neighbourhood.

Events such as ‘Music By the Bay’ and those renting the pavilion in the Park, are in large part, welcomed by residents. They make the park a dynamic, interactive place but, importantly, are of a limited duration and are not pervasive and non-stop. Pickleball’s popularity will probably mean that the courts will be constantly in use during daylight hours, not only on weekends, like most park events, but during the week as well by the growing numbers of the Blue Mountains’ retirement community.

The one very simple solution, that seems to appease all in addressing noise complaints, is to relocate or build the courts in the first place in non-residential areas. In talking to some of the TBM staff I was told that constructing a pickleball court near Moreau Park on the community centre precincts, which is also zoned for recreational use, is not feasible because of nearby residents. What we don’t understand is why it is unacceptable for one group of residents and not for another. The majority of my fellow Bayview Park neighbours are full time residents, so weekend or seasonal status should not factor in.
2. Traffic / Parking

Another of our concerns is the traffic and the requisite increase in demand for parking these courts will cause. Given the increasing popularity of pickleball not only do I anticipate a healthy participation by the general public, there is also the local pickleball club with 120 members and another 40 on its waiting list that will be avid users of the courts. This in and of itself is great. Getting people out in the fresh air, having fun and getting healthy exercise is a laudable goal.

However, those using Bayview Park and its surrounding residents are between a rock and a hard place. Namely, they are wedged in by Georgian Bay and Highway 26. There are no options in or out except by the highway. Needless to say, we all know that congestion on Highway 26 through Thornbury is an inescapable fact and will only continue to worsen. A location for these courts anywhere south of the highway would allow this additional traffic to be disbursed across the option of multiple routes. As well, Bay Street East is already a very busy road in the summer, is adding additional traffic to that mix of picnicking families, children in the playground, tennis players, dog walkers and residents really necessary?

As for parking, it is my understanding that a paved parking lot will be built on the green space beside the pickleball courts and that consideration is being given to making these pay parking spots. Potentially, if the four courts are being used at full capacity and half that number are waiting to play, that could potentially mean that 24 cars would need parking spots. Unless most of the green space is paved over for parking, there wouldn’t be room to accommodate them all.

3. Cost

The town will be spending $160,000 on the pickleball courts. I’m not going to debate whether that should be spent on pickleball. Everyone’s priorities are different. Some people think that money should go to kid’s programs, some think that it’s a lot of money for the relatively small demographic that most pickleball players fall into and some think that the long-suffering sidewalks of Clarksburg should get preference. The important point is that although 90% of the funds are coming from the development charges fund and 10% from general revenues it is not in fact a “mostly tax free” project. The use of these funds under the Development Charges Act is to offset the cost of growth related infrastructure of new development which otherwise would have to be paid by increasing property taxes of existing taxpayers. Municipalities can use these funds for infrastructure such as water, sewers and roads (and sidewalks, I assume) or for soft services such as recreational centres and libraries. A bigger question is where pickleball courts fit in to the municipality’s priority list. Without more research I don’t really know. What I do know is that many of the people I’ve spoken to feel strongly that this decision was made in a vacuum with no community input. Which leads me to my next topic:

4. Consultations / Communications

I understand that the decision to spend $160,000 on pickleball courts was approved in the Council’s 2019 budget deliberations that took place sometime last year. This was of course just one item in the myriad of budgetary approvals being decided and allowed for no public consultation on this specific issue. I’m told that as this is not a re-zoning issue - the land is already zoned as recreational - then no
notice needed to be given to local residents. There was no communication from the town that the construction was imminent on the green space and that it would be completely torn up. But the strongest objections to this project that I’ve heard are because of the perceived surreptitious approval of this project. Many are still livid about what they call the Esso Station fiasco. It is this public perception of secrecy that causes people to distrust their political representatives.

When I talked to staff I was told that three local residents were consulted: The Condie’s who live directly in front of the tennis courts and who have been told by a real estate professional that the pickleball courts will in fact decrease their property value, The Condie’s next door neighbour, Mr. Norman, whose house is up for sale and Tom Kritsch, the newest addition to the homeowners across from Bayview Park. I know that the Condie’s had to repeatedly call the town office to talk to someone and then resorted to showing up in person to make an appointment with a TBM staffer. In their case it was not consultation, it was just a staffer hearing them out and then saying, sorry the decision’s already been made. These three consultations were done long after the pickleball decision was made and the budget approved. It would seem that only the Thornbury Pickleball Club had any advance notice.

5. Loss of Green Space

Unlike the Thornbury of my childhood that I spent blithely roaming around town, there is not as much green space now as there was back in what used to be the Town of Thornbury. That’s not to say that the Town’s evolution and growth has not been positive, but I think what makes us unique is the charm of Thornbury as a village without the plethora of box stores, retail chains, fast food strips and pay parking. But to maintain this uniqueness it is vital to preserve those open green spaces that remain and to check the impulse to develop every space, be it with houses, retail outlets or recreational facilities. Once they’ve been developed, there’s no going back. People choose to retire to this area for the small town charm, green space and peace and quiet - otherwise why move from the city at all? I believe that the green space beside the tennis courts has inherent value in that it gives a sense of openness to the neighbourhood and is a visual respite from our propensity to fill every nook and cranny.

This green space is also used for playing frisbee, catch and kicking a soccer ball around etc. Not every recreational site needs to be structured and built upon. We need undesignated recreational spaces so that people can choose to do what they please. And personally, speaking as one who uses this green space every day, it is also free of droppings from our beloved, yet messy, herd of Bayview Park Canada Geese.

Conclusion

In closing, I really think it would be a good faith gesture by the council to delay this project, communicate with local residents and seek public input.

As I said earlier, the very simple solution to all of the above concerns is to move the pickleball courts to a non-residential area. I understand that the Tomahawk Golf Course complex was one of the sites under consideration. It is non-residential, has plenty of room for courts and, even though I was told by staff that it was not chosen because it doesn’t have toilets, it does in fact have portable toilets in place that
are used by everyone else at Tomahawk. For something more permanent, perhaps a little kiosk like the one beside the children’s playground at Bayview could be built for minimal cost.

As well, the President of the Thornbury Pickleball Club, who was one of the originators of the request for outdoor pickleball courts, has said that it was the town who made the final decision on the Bayview Park location. Whatever the President’s preference may be, I have heard from other club members that Tomahawk would also be quite acceptable.

In closing, a relocation to an alternate site would be the ideal solution. The Community Centre Precinct and Bayview Park are surrounded by residents. Only Tomahawk seems like an ideal choice: It’s non-residential, has plenty of space, has toilet facilities and existing parking space. That way it may not be necessary, as Joni Mitchell sings, to “Pave paradise and put up a parking lot”.

Thank you.
Pickleball Issues

• Noise

Traffic / Parking

Cost

Lack of Consultation / Communication

Loss of Green Space
1. Noise

• “Played with a plastic ball... and hard paddles made of graphite or some other material, pickleball makes a unique noise that is something like table tennis on steroids. Like tennis, there’s a back and forth rhythm to a rally but the strokes come in quicker succession - the courts being smaller - and the impacts sound sharper - the ball and rackets having no give” - The Naple News, Florida

• ....(people) also complain about the noise as a type of ‘Chinese water torture’. ... I can’t live with this constant ‘pong, pong, pong’ every morning. (Don’t) I have the right to live here in a quiet environment?’ ... Laws governing nuisances have generally found that residents should not have to deal with unreasonably loud noises all day long. (They) could be required to take remedial actions, such as moving the pickleball courts or establishing restrictions.” - Report from Channel 7 News (WSVN-Fox), South Florida
“Pickleball courts are small and two games can be played on one tennis court at the same time. Players have been flocking to local tennis courts, but the popularity led to problems... Neighbours complained about the game noise between 9 am and 9 pm, prompting the city to relocate the players to other parks that are farther away from homes.”

- Kingston Heritage, Kingston Ontario
Noise Con’t

• “The sound of a pickleball paddle strike is less like the low-frequency strike of a tennis racket, and, instead more like the high-frequency strike of a ping pong paddle, the (law)suit says.” — *The Aiken Standard, Aiken County, South Carolina*

• Pickleball Noise Problems: Nearby Residents Complain. Shhhh Quiet! ...for many non-pickleball-playing residents that live near pickleball courts the sound can sour their view of the sport and lead them to question if a sport that produces this noise level should be allowed.” — *thepickleballportal.com*

• “Pickleball paddle noise is in a sound classification called impact noise... It is a high-frequency noise that is at a frequency that our ears are most attuned to.” — *Acoustiblok, acoustiblok.com*
Noise Con’t

• “Too Loud! Pickleball noise upsets neighbours” “While the popularity of Pickleball multiplies exponentially, it’s scoring resistance from neighbors who say the game is simply too loud. Detractors in Green Valley are so annoyed they’re talking about a lawsuit.” — Green Valley News, Green Valley, Arizona

• “The sport’s wood and graphite rackets and plastic balls meant ‘there was a constant banging’ when the courts were in use, often from morning until evening ... the divisions [amongst residents and players] have prompted heated meeting among property owners, calls for noise studies and claims that pickleball is destroying property values.” — The Wall Street Journal
2. Traffic / Parking

• Only access, in or out, for Bayview Park is via Highway 26

• With Pickleball and Tennis courts, there could be a need for over 30 parking spots at one time

• A paved parking lot on the green space would be an ‘urban’ eyesore
Thankfully, not Highway 26. Yet...
Parking Lot with space for lots of pickleball players!
3. Cost

• $160,000 for construction of pickleball courts

• Financed by funds that can also be used for infrastructure projects

• Decision made and cost approved at budget deliberations in 2018
4. Lack of Consultation / Communication

- No communication to residents about construction
- No consultations with residents before decision on pickleball court was made and budget approved
- Public perception that this issue was decided in secrecy
5. Loss of Green Space

• Loss of green space is permanent

• Open unstructured recreational space allows users their choice of activities

• Loss takes away from peacefulness and ambience of the Bayview Park neighbourhood
Bayview Park Tennis Courts
1. Bayview Park Green Space
2. Bayview Park Green Space
3. Bayview Park Green Space
Herd of Canada Geese

Watch your step!
Ivy Sutherland
TBM Dog tag #300
“I love this Green Space. There’s lots of good smells!”
Moreau Park

Area: Clarksburg
Address: 76 Victoria Street South & 128 Alfred Street West
Parking: Yes

This park is one of the Town’s most well used parks. It is made up of 3 baseball diamonds, a skateboard park, a playground and an enclosed off leash dog park. There are portable toilets onsite and the park is located directly across the street from the Beaver Valley Community Centre and Arena.

Amenities:
- Baseball Diamonds (3)
- Dog Park (enclosed, off leash)
- Playground
- Skateboard Park
- Green Space
- Washrooms

Google Maps Directions
Bayview Park

Area: Thornbury
Address: 60 and 106 Bay Street East
Parking: Yes, very limited

Bayview Park is one of the Town’s most popular picnic areas. With its beautiful waterfront, large covered pavilion and manicured greenspaces this park is a perfect location for family reunions, outdoor weddings and other social gatherings. The park is also well suited for young children as it is equipped with washroom facilities and playground equipment. The park’s tennis courts and sand volleyball court also make this park ideal for active families.

Amenities:
- Green Space
- Trail (soft surface)
- Pavilion
- Picnic Tables
- Playground
- Shuffleboard Court
- Tennis Courts
- Volleyball Court
- Washrooms
- Waterfront (pebble)
Tomahawk Recreation Complex

Area: Thornbury
Address: 417230 10th Line
Parking: Yes

Amenities:
- Soccer Fields
- Golf Course
- Washrooms

Google Maps Directions
Thank you