

TENNIS AND PICKLEBALL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 2023 – 10:00 A.M.
ADAMS TENNIS COMPLEX

Commission Members Present: Mr. Dee Jernigan, Chair
Mr. Alan Cutler, Mr. Rick LaLance,
Mr. Newton Molloy, Mr. Robert White,
Mr. Shawn Wright, Council Member, and
Dr. Gloria Bonner (ex officio)

Commission Members Absent: Ms. Mary Elam Polk and Mr. Chris Massaro

City Staff Present: Mr. Nate Williams, Exec. Director of Recreation Services
Ms. Katie Driver, Asst. City Attorney
Mr. Thomas Laird, MPRD Assistant Director
Ms. Mitzi Hughes

After the meeting was called to order, Mr. Alan Cutler was introduced as a new member to the commission. He was recently appointed by Mayor McFarland to represent the interests of the Murfreesboro pickleball community.

Mr. Jernigan presented for approval the Tennis Commission Meeting Minutes from May 11, 2023, and June 15, 2023. Mr. Rick LaLance made a motion to approve both sets of minutes as read. Mr. Shawn Wright seconded, and motion was carried by the following vote:

Aye: Dee Jernigan
Rick LaLance
Newton Molloy
Robert White
Shawn Wright

Nay: None

Abstained: Alan Cutler

Mr. Williams announced that block time for the Adams Tennis Complex (ATC) was the item for discussion today. He said that no change is planned for block time prioritization this year, but the Mayor and City Council have requested that the commission develop a policy for prioritization of block time for future years.

Mr. LaLance said that there were two times as many block time requests for the last fiscal year as seven years ago. Of the 129 requesters for 2022, Mr. LaLance said he was interested in how many were original donors to the ATC. He said he did not expect the original donors to stop paying for their memberships and get kicked out of their block time slots, and he added that he understood that both block time and programming had to be accommodated. Mr. Williams said that the original policy regarding block time indicates that a member can keep their prioritization if they keep their membership current. Mr. LaLance said the structure for

prioritization upon the opening of the ATC may not apply in a few years with increasing memberships, block time requests, regular programming and MTSU's usage. Mr. LaLance mentioned that patrons have been asking if a membership could be passed down to the family of a member who may not be able to fulfill their membership status at some point for whatever reason.

Mr. Robert White asked for more explanation of what Council is wanting from this commission. Mr. Williams stated that the Mayor and Council are requesting this commission to define the expectations of membership prioritization for future years because a cap will most likely have to be placed on block time slots at some point. Mr. Williams added that 98% of block time requests were granted this year; however, honoring that many requests may not always be possible without a change to the prioritization. He said staff has up to this point been able to extend hours for block time requests and can do so again when possible. Also, staff has considered using a lottery system to assign block time slots. Mr. Shawn Wright agreed that Council wants clear rules created by this commission that stipulate block time prioritization expectations for upcoming years. Mr. Molloy and Mr. LaLance both mentioned that the patrons with lower membership numbers will age out eventually, and this commission needs to decide if the membership numbers are to be deleted from the membership number list, or if their families could take over the numbers. The other commission members agreed that the issue needs to be determined.

Mr. Newton Molloy said he did some calculations based on an ATC staff spreadsheet covering 22 weeks of block time scheduling (ranging from late October 2022 into March 2023). He stated that of the 100 low priority numbers, those members filled up about 22.6% of the block time slots. And, by checking from the lowest number on up to the 250 mark of priority numbers, those members represented 44.35% of the block time users. Mr. Molloy also explained that for the same time span, block time usage accounted for 34.2% of the ATC's schedule; the pros/programming took up about 27.5%; MTSU's Men's Tennis – 13%; and MTSU's Women's Tennis - 11.4%. He added that the block time vacancies were 30-minute slots here and there, including some early in the morning and some late in the day. Mr. Molloy added that there are still 16 courts outside that can be used for a lot of things. Mr. Williams agreed and said that a number of camps and programs were moved outside this summer to help free up the inside courts. Mr. Molloy said he was glad to see the youth outside. Mr. Laird further stated that the programming staff would rather be outside any time possible.

Mr. Williams said that staff will check on the allocation of total court time usage and provide that data to the commission. Mr. Thomas Laird said that the original criteria for block time prioritization still gives the lower membership numbers a higher prioritization for block times. He also mentioned that staff tries to balance MTSU team usage, block time requests, and lessons/programming.

There were several meeting attendees who asked that more pickleball courts be added in Murfreesboro. Tennis supporters were concerned that they might lose some of their courts due to the requests of pickleball supporters. Mr. White asked if this commission could discuss land use and the possibility of adding more courts. Mr. Williams gave an update on current plans for Old Fort Park. He stated that the City was already in a contract with a design firm for renovation of the front ball field, its parking lot, and stormwater issues. Also, in the fall, possibly

by mid-October, a request for bids will be sent out for the design of the planned skate park that is to be added where Pavilions 1 and 2 used to be. Further, a contract is in effect with WOLD Architects and Engineers for the redesign and renovation of the original eight outdoor tennis courts. The first meeting with WOLD will be today, and staff will request pickleball courts to be incorporated in the plans, if possible. Mr. Williams further said that the court renovations will include court resurfacing, LED lighting, fencing, and a hitting wall.

Mr. Molloy stated that he did not think USTA would use tennis courts which also have pickleball lines. Several guest attendees stated that USTA and other big tournaments won't hold tournaments at Old Fort Park if there is a reduction in tennis courts, and that could cause big tournaments to be held in other cities, including Spring Fling.

Mr. LaLance recommended that anyone wishing to speak about court availability for tennis or pickleball or about USTA not using the courts at Old Fort Park due to a reduction of tennis courts should sign up to speak during a Public Comment time slot at a designated City Council meeting (opportunity available once each month), usually on the first Thursday, unless it's a holiday week or another scheduling conflict exists. Mr. LaLance also suggested that the tennis supporters be sure to check their facts about USTA not booking Old Fort Park courts if any tennis courts were to become unavailable for tournaments. He said too that it would be beneficial for tennis supporters to consolidate what they want to say to Council and for pickleball supporters to consolidate what they want to say to Council before either group voices their respective concerns.

A couple of meeting guests wanted to know why they couldn't voice their concerns with this commission. Mr. LaLance explained that they could but added that Council has the final say on what gets funded for all City Departments. He pointed out that Mr. Shawn Wright, who is the Council representative for this commission, is listening to their concerns today and will pass them on to Council.

Mr. Jernigan said that he was on the Parks and Recreation Commission for almost 30 years and saw first-hand how the commission and Parks and Recreation Department struggled with development of a number of recreation facilities, since they did not have an unlimited budget or always have properties available for development. He added that through Council's guidance, the department was always able to make the most of what money and land became available. Also, Mr. Jernigan mentioned that Murfreesboro has earned the President's Cup through the Tennessee Parks and Recreation Association more times than other big cities in Tennessee in its category due to having the best parks system in the state. Mr. Jernigan shared that softball and baseball bring in more games at Spring Fling than tennis, and Murfreesboro partners with other local athletic facilities to host the numerous games scheduled during the event. He believes partnering with MTSU for use of additional courts, if needed, would be possible.

Mr. White requested that staff keep up with the usage of the outside and inside courts at Old Fort Park and report the data to this commission. Mr. Jernigan commented that tennis and pickleball are both "grossly underserved" in this community, but the "sole focus of this commission is to the residents of the City of Murfreesboro." He further stated that a lot of ATC members do not live within the City limits of Murfreesboro, and he suggested that those

individuals request their tennis court needs with their own community's government(s). Mr. Jernigan additionally said that this commission is here to give advice and feedback on tennis matters (and recently on pickleball matters) and can forward suggestions to City Council, which most of the time go along with the commission's suggestions and decisions, but not always.

Several other attendees mentioned that they worked hard to get the ATC built and that they support pickleball, but they don't want their tennis courts taken away. A local realtor suggested that pickleball supporters rally together and try to push for pickleball courts like tennis supporters pushed and helped fund the ATC. One woman said that she has heard that a lot of developers are including pickleball courts in their plans, including 32 courts in the Del Webb Homes development and over 20 on Franklin Road. She also requested that someone look into how many pickleball courts are being included in current area developments, because the need for pickleball courts might not be as great as it seems now. Another attendee said that he hoped the City could accommodate pickleball without taking away from tennis, while also upgrading courts around town that need renovation.

Mr. LaLance reminded the tennis and pickleball supporters to plan to speak to Council regarding their concerns. He further mentioned that everyone should be aware that it'll take money and time to change any existing tennis courts to pickleball courts and that there would be steps to take through appropriate City and State departments to get the desired outcomes. Mr. LaLance said a couple of tennis courts could possibly be used for pickleball temporarily and then go back to tennis when other pickleball courts can be incorporated into upcoming Parks and Recreation Department developments, like at West Park. Mr. Jernigan also said that the department will do everything possible to accommodate the wishes of the tennis and pickleball supporters. Being no more business, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting adjourned: 10:52 a.m.

D. Edwin Jernigan, Jr.
Tennis and Pickleball Commission Chair

Nate Williams
Executive Director of Recreation Services