

Mayor's Corner July 2025

Pickleball Courts – Is it a Good Decision?

By Elspeth McLean-Wile

At the June 24 Council meeting we approved a memorandum of understanding and lease agreement with the South Shore Pickleball Association to build six pickleball courts at the MARC in Dayspring.

The discussion around locating and funding construction of pickleball courts in the District has been ongoing since 2021. Initially budgeted by the previous Council for \$800,000, bids for the work came in at \$1.45 and \$1.6 million. The decision was made not to proceed with awarding tenders; the budget for the project was set aside.

During the first week I was elected as your Mayor, representatives of the South Shore Pickleball Association met with me to assess interest in resurrecting the project to develop pickleball courts. Residents did talk to me about pickleball and their interest in seeing pickleball courts developed by the Municipality.

Pickleball is an incredibly fast-growing sport throughout North America; it is enjoyed by people of all ages, requires little equipment, and has a big following throughout Lunenburg County. It seemed like we should look at the possibility of getting municipally-owned courts.

We restarted the discussion with a presentation to Council in 2023. We followed up by looking at what might be possible in partnership with the South Shore Pickleball Association. Council was concerned about the total costs and how an agreement with a private organization could assure the public of free access to the facility.

After a lengthy negotiation with the South Shore Pickleball Association we agreed to a deal which provides residents here with six outdoor courts located at the MARC. Residents are guaranteed free access two hours a day during June to September. Our Recreation Department will also have access to book programming time.

MODL will pay for the cost of construction estimated to be \$555,000. With grants from government and third-parties and lease payments from the Club (paid over 15 years), we expect the capital cost to the Municipality to be less than \$300,000.

The lease with the South Shore Pickleball Association includes leasing the land and details the terms of payment over the life of the agreement (17 years). The Club is fully responsible for ongoing maintenance, repairs, insurance and all other operational costs related to the

courts. The Municipality agreed to provide and maintain garbage bins and collection, a portable toilet, a bench, and lawn moving services.

I think this is good value for taxpayers; the Council agrees. Having a pickleball court adds to the array of recreation assets we have in the District and supports the volunteer and community organizations we have. This is an exciting development in the approach our Council can take in partnership with our community and I look forward to what other projects are possible by working together.