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President's Report - March 2024

Nolan Ahn, PAK President

PICKLEBALL WARS

If you have been playing pickleball for a while, chances are you find it an incredibly social sport. That's just one of the reasons it's the fastest growing sport in the world. But growth has its problems. While player numbers are growing, the available places to grow is not keeping up. A recent tiff at the Ala Moana courts points this out. I thank Jen Wilson of Pickleball 808 for "writing" my report for March. I am quoting from her weekly newsletter. If you are not subscribed to the free feed, please do so, as she has great insights as to what is happening with pickleball throughout the state.

The short version: some tennis peeps got upset at pickleballers using the hitting wall at the Ala Moana Courts, complained, and got pickleballers booted.

Oahu Pickleball Association is circulating a petition to the powers that be and it is worth sharing. Here it is:

Attn: Department of Parks and Recreation - Ala Moana Regional Park - (AMRP)

Honorable Mayor Rick Blangiardi (808) 768-4141 www8.honolulu.gov/mayor/contact-the-mayor

Director of Parks and Recreation Laura Thielen (808) 768-3001 laura.thielen@honolulu.gov

West Honolulu District Manager Brandon Kono (808) 768-9282 bkono@honolulu.gov



share the hitting wall area.

DPR Mission Statement:

We accomplish our vision by: creating park programs and environments that are safe, active, welcoming, and engaging; investing in staff growth and development; **gathering data and feedback to assess, improve, and develop plans that are responsive and supportive of community needs; engaging in ongoing professional growth to stay relevant and evolve to meet community needs; aligning to division-wide standards, outcomes, and guidelines to promote program quality and continuous improvement;** collaborating internally across our department with a focus on high quality impact; and by building relationships with external organizations through the sharing of knowledge, skills, and resources.

The reasons for this petition are to:

- meet the community needs of the **urban core**;
- provide equitable use of public resources;
- use an underutilized public area;
- address the need for pickleball courts with lights — many players work during the day and can only play at night; and
- to come into alignment with other tennis facilities that have pickleball lines on Tennis Courts/Facilities. No park rule or policy states Tennis courts are only for Tennis. E.g., Diamond Head Tennis Center, Aiea District Park, Ewa Mahiko District Park, Mililani Neighborhood Park, Pacific Palisades Community Park, Wai'anae District Park, Kailua District Park and Wai'alu District Park.
- have been sharing the hitting wall with tennis players and playing pickleball in same area since 2018 with very little incidents.

We request that the City and County of Honolulu Department of Parks & Recreation consider the following response for AMRP:

Line three pickleball courts in the hitting wall area to make it a hybrid tennis hitting wall/pickleball court with permanent lines of different color for both sports. Remove sign on Hitting Wall entrance which currently states "THIS COURT IS FOR TENNIS ONLY". I also support the expansion and building of additional pickleball courts with lights at Ala Moana District Park and other urban core centers within Honolulu.

Pickleball is the fastest-growing sport in the United States. According to the USA Pickleball Association (USAP), there are over 36.5 MILLION players, and that number is quickly growing. Due to the soaring popularity of this decades-old



lead to better cholesterol and blood pressure levels, lowering your risk of heart disease.

- Prevents Osteoporosis. Since pickleball is a low-impact sport and easy on the body, it's a great way to get movement in and maintain healthy bones, joints and muscles. By playing pickleball, you'll reduce the rate of bone loss and help conserve bone tissue.
- Boosts mood and mental health. Playing pickleball with others helps stimulate your brain while releasing endorphins. This can reduce anxiety, depression and stress, allowing you to elevate your mind and mental health.
- Social Connections. Pickleball can help you meet new friends and stay socially engaged by having fun, laughing and making connections. Regular participation reduces isolation and improves your emotional health and well-being.
- Keeping our Parks safe and clean. When people gather in parks and have activity, it puts more "eyes on the streets," exposing criminals to constant community surveillance; e.g., Mother Waldron Park



My research finds that the population of Oahu is 953,207. Kauai's is 66,921. It is just a matter of time before we are faced with the need for a petition asking for relief from unfair treatment and not having enough places to play. The recent shutdown of Emmalani Courts in Princeville are not a good direction and there are no signs of willingness and abilities of our County to provide a safe, dedicated pickleball facility that can accommodate our growing player lists. Just a reminder that our first Member Appreciation Day is March 30, at Kalena Park in Lihue from 10 am to 2:00 pm. Free clinics for beginners, intermediate and advanced levels, as well as a referee clinic and a high-level match exhibition. Uncle Aaron Uyeda will make his famous chicken hekka and all are invited.

Until next month,
Nolan



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