

## **Clay Tennis Court Committee and Recommendations**

Joli McCathran and Greg Silber, Co-Chairs

The Committee's charge and list of members are attached. The Committee and a number of interested Town residents met on several times throughout the summer and fall.

At these various meetings the Committee concluded decisions regarding the tennis courts should be made on "playability" of the courts and their usefulness to Town residents, as well as on costs associated with either modifying or maintaining the existing courts. The Committee also expressed the strong interest in including as many Town residents and tennis players as possible in its deliberations; and an interest in doing what it could to increase the level of tennis being played on the courts

Some expressed the view that costs (of any action taken) could be a significant deciding factor in approaches taken regarding the Town's tennis courts, while others indicated that if the sentiments of residents, and the will of the Council, were sufficiently strong (for any action taken) the funds needed could be appropriated. Some felt the difference in costs between maintaining existing courts and constructing and maintaining asphalt courts may be relatively small in the long run. Therefore, we agreed we needed more, and more current, information on costs.

We agreed we needed costs estimates – both by professional tennis court companies and for those involving Town resources (e.g., paid residents, Town maintenance) -- to cover a full range and various combinations of possible actions, including

- maintaining (spring conditioning and daily servicing) two clay courts
- maintaining (spring conditioning and daily servicing) one clay court
- paving and any long-term maintenance of one court
- paving and any long-term maintenance of two courts long-term maintenance of the existing asphalt court

On August 21 members of the Committee and other interested Town residents visited the Town of Cheverly, Maryland and met with Bill Barnes. Cheverly has four natural clay courts and Har-Tru courts which Bill maintains. Players from Washington Grove tested out the Cheverly's natural clay courts. All who played on this surface said if the Grove clay courts were up to this standard it would be an ideal playing surface.

On October 15, 2013 Bill Barnes visited the courts in Washington Grove. He indicated the Town was fortunate to have a very good situation with regard to its soft courts, and reported that a near ideal playing surface could be achieved with proper restoration including rolling heavily this fall and general maintenance. Bill Barnes offered to give to Washington Grove a heavy roller. Although there is no motor in the unit, Steve Werts has the proficiency to install a motor over the winter. In the course of the winter, Town maintenance staff expects to work on correcting the drainage which is necessary regardless of the surface area of the courts and continue weed control.

At the next meeting on 29 Oct. 2013 the Committee unanimously agreed to improve the courts by heavily rolling the surface with a rented roller this fall and designate the remainder of FY 2014 and FY 2015 a test year. Town residents and tennis players will be invited to play on the surface immediately after the heavy rolling and for the remainder of the fall to assess how the courts play. This will allow time for the courts to be upgraded and to see if the quality can be increased while monitoring records of costs. All interested tennis players attending this meeting also unanimously agreed to this plan.

The recommended estimate for the balance of FY 2014 budget is \$1450. The Committee recommends a budget of \$3260 for the FY 2015 budget. This would allow for the purchase of tape lines and other necessary materials for purchase in the spring and necessary maintenance and supplies for FY 2015.

The Committee asks the Mayor to send out Grove Alert notifying residents about the heavy rolling to be performed next week. The Committee is asking players to “test” the rolled court surface and report to the Committee on or before the next scheduled meeting on December 10, 2013. The Committee is seeking input of playability with just the rolling process. If the level of satisfaction is reported, the Maintenance staff will prepare for the spring maintenance.

Respectfully submitted,

The Tennis Court Committee

## **Charge from the Mayor and Town Council to the Clay Court Committee**

**10 June 2013**

During the budget discussion for fiscal 2014 it was proposed that the underutilized Clay Courts area be scheduled for conversion to asphalt. The proposal was intended to reduce the labor and cost of court maintenance and increase the use of our tennis courts overall. Further input brought up the need for evaluation of this proposal and the need for a committee to examine the ramifications and report back to the Mayor and Town Council.

The Committee should consider

Financial parameters: If the Clay Courts are retained as either a “dirt court” (our current situation) or clay courts, what is the cost and how does this compare to the installation and then the maintenance cost of new asphalt courts. Please note that for many years our current clay courts were facilitated by a strong volunteer effort. In recent years much of the court maintenance and all of the organization has fallen on Linda Baim a situation that is unfair and unsustainable.

Resident feedback and resident use: What is the sense of resident response to the future of the Clay Courts area? Note number of residents responding as well as the tenor of the response. Please see the attached opinion of the Historic Preservation Commission. They value the historic tradition of tennis over the exact venue on which it is played. This brings up the associated question: Is continuing to have tennis courts a good use of Town tax money? Although we think we know the answer to this, we would like the Committee to include it in their deliberations.

The goal of your Committee is to provide the Mayor and Council with the information we need to come to a decision about what to do going forward. The Committee recommendation and Council decision should allow for contingencies, especially the state of the Town finances. We expect to keep the cost modest in the near future while allowing for changes as the economic climate improves.

List of Committee Members

Joli McCathran, Co-Chair

Greg Silber, Co-Chair

Linda Baim

Birgit Henniger

Meredith Horan

Sita Strother

Warren Winter