

From: Kate Van Gent

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To: parkboard <parkboard@bellevuewa.gov>; Kroeger, Ken <KKroeger@bellevuewa.gov>

Subject: Dedicated pickleball courts at Bellevue Airfield Park

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I worked with Senator John Lovick in the successful effort to make pickleball the official sport of Washington State. Naturally, I was excited to hear that Bellevue is considering adding dedicated pickleball courts at Bellevue Airfield Park as presented by David Lai and Leslie Wang in the 6/14 Bellevue Parks advisory board meeting.

When I first started playing pickleball in 2020 as a way to interact socially distanced outdoors during Covid, the first thing I noticed was lack of places to play. The second thing I noticed was a lack of knowledge about what pickleball was. In May 2022 Major League Pickleball rang the bell at the New York Stock Exchange. The Seattle Mariners are hosting a pickleball night this September. National Geographic interviewed Senator John Lovick at this year's Seattle Metro Classic pickleball tournament for a story about pickleball. The Alzheimer's Foundation combined their fundraising with pickleball this year, for the first time. I was a volunteer at that event. The fundraiser attracted a large pickleball crowd and they exceeded their fundraising goal.

I'm proud that our efforts to pass the pickleball bill and expand pickleball courts have served to support physical health and fitness, strengthened community interaction, and served to honor the legacy of the pickleball's founders, Washingtonians Joel Pritchard, Barney McCallum and Bill Bell.

By including pickleball in their plan, Bellevue can engage many more members of the community in a smaller space, fitting 24 people in the same area normally played by 8 people on two tennis courts. The equipment is affordable and can be played by youth and seniors. Best of all, youth and seniors can play together in very competitive games.

Most of you know that pickleball is the fastest growing sport, but did you know that 700 pickleball tournaments are held throughout the United States each year? That people travel throughout the United States and Canada to compete in these tournaments, and that these tournaments generate economic revenue for their local towns and cities? The Seattle Metro Pickleball Classic held at Shoreview Park this month had 650 registered players on 18 temporary courts over a five day period. Per Tammy Dunn, Executive Director of the Snohomish County Sports Commission, this pickleball tournament

generated half a million dollars in economic impact directly into the local economy. A large dedicated pickleball facility capable of hosting tournaments and leagues can similarly generate economic impact revenue for the city of Bellevue.

I appreciate that Bellevue is paying attention to the benefit dedicated pickleball facilities can bring and hope that pickleball will be included in your parks and public spaces.

Sincerely,

Kate Van Gent
Seattle Metro Pickleball Assn Director
USA Pickleball Ambassador