



TO: Chair and Members of the Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: JoAnne Plummer, Neighborhood Services Director

CONTACT: Justin Wilkins, Parks and Recreation Manager

SUBJECT: Summary of Findings from Pickleball Community Listening and Feedback Sessions

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file a presentation summarizing the findings from three community listening and feedback sessions regarding pickleball court use at the Goleta Community Center.

BACKGROUND:

In January 2026, the City of Goleta Parks and Recreation Division assumed direct management of programming and operations for the pickleball courts at the Goleta Community Center (GCC). To inform future programming as a result of this transition, staff conducted three community outreach and listening sessions in April 2026 to gather feedback on court use and reservation practices. Sessions were scheduled across weekdays, evening, and weekend timeframes to maximize accessibility. Sessions were held on Tuesday, April 7th, 12:00 -1:00 p.m., Thursday, April 9th - 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., & Sunday, April 12th – 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

The sessions provided an overview of current policies and usage trends, followed by facilitated discussions and opportunities for written input. Participants, including reservation holders, drop-in users, and prospective players—shared feedback on key topics such as the online reservation system, the benefits and drawbacks of both reservable and open play court hours, access, communication, and overall user experience.

Input collected from these sessions, along with supplemental written comments, offers valuable qualitative insight to complement ongoing analysis of court usage data. This feedback will help inform future policy considerations and potential adjustments to scheduling and reservation practices to support equitable access and improved user experience.

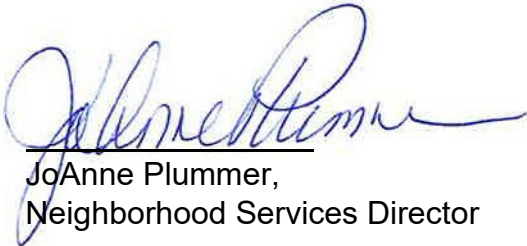
DISCUSSION:

Following the completion of the pickleball community feedback and listening sessions, staff has compiled and analyzed participant input and prepared a presentation summarizing key findings and recurring themes. These findings will be organized and presented within four primary categories: open play, reservations, the reservation system, and other/future opportunities. This framework reflects the most consistent areas of interest and concern expressed by participants across all three sessions.

Based on the feedback received, staff have identified several potential considerations for future evaluation. These include exploring opportunities to expand open play during high-demand periods such as holidays, assessing underutilized hours of open play and reservations and adjusting the use as needed to maximize court usage, assessing the functionality and user experience of the current online reservation system (SignUp Genius), and evaluating alternative reservation platforms that may improve accessibility, fairness, and ease of use. Additional considerations may include adjustments to court allocation, communication methods, and pilot program opportunities to better balance the needs of diverse user groups.

Staff is seeking Commission observations and guidance on these preliminary themes and potential considerations. Notably, three Commission Members attended separate sessions and can provide additional firsthand perspective on community input. Feedback from the Commission will help inform staff's evaluation of potential improvements in the future. Any proposed adjustments or improvements to court programming, scheduling, or reservation policies will be further developed with adjustments made as necessary.

Approved By:



JoAnne Plummer,
Neighborhood Services Director

Summary of Findings from Pickleball Community Listening & Feedback Sessions

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting
May 13, 2026



Process & Overview

Community Listening Sessions

- Advertised via Social Media, email, City channels
- Held three sessions at varying times @ GCC
 - Tuesday, April 7th, 12:00 -1:00 p.m.
 - Thursday, April 9th - 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
 - Sunday, April 12th – 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.
- Obtained 144 unique sign-in and email address
- 188 written comments at the three sessions
- 18 additional emails / comments from the community



Key Themes

OPEN PLAY

ONLINE
RESERVATION
SYSTEM

RESERVATION
PLAY

FUTURE &
OTHER
OPPORTUNITIES



Key Themes (cont.)

- Equity and Fair Access to Reservations (Approx. 70–75% of responses)
- Reservation System Challenges (Approx. 60–65%)
- Interest in System Improvements and Alternatives (Approx. 55–60%)
- Consecutive Bookings and Court Hoarding (Approx. 45–50%)
- System Enforcement and Accountability (Approx. 40–45%)
- Open Play Demand and Flexibility (Approx. 50–55%)
- Group Play and Informal Leagues (Approx. 30–35%)



Current Overview of Operations

Goleta Community Center (GCC) Courts

- General Court Hours
 - 8:00 am to 8:30 pm
 - 365 days a year (unless rain or weather conditions)
- Open Play Hours
 - Monday – Friday: 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm
 - Weekends: 1:00 pm to 8:30 pm
 - Total Open Court Hours Per Week – 37.5



GCC Courts (Cont.)

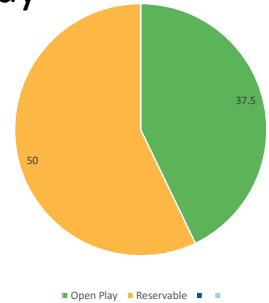
- Reservable Court Hours
 - Monday – Friday: 8:00 am to 4:00 pm
 - Weekends: 8:00 am to 1:00 pm
 - Program Hours
 - 3 hours per week for dedicated Senior play
 - 5 hours per week for Boys & Girls Club
 - Total Reservable & Program Court Hours Per Week - 50



Usage by Numbers

- Courts are open 87.5 Hours Per Week
 - 57% of those hours are dedicated to reserved play
 - 43% of those hours are dedicated to open play

- Considering 5 Courts are in Operation
 - Provides 437.5 Court User Hours
 - 267 Reserved Hours (Less Sr/B&G Club)
 - 117.5 Open Play Hours



Usage by Numbers (Cont.)

- Max Usage by Type
 - Based on 4 Players Per Court, Max # of Players
 - Reserved Play – 1,068 people per game, per week
 - Open Play – 1,880 people per game, per week

- Usage Differs by Type
 - Reservation Play – Single group of 4 players uses one court for one hour
 - Open Play – On average, four groups of 4 players (up to 16) could cycle through one court on any given hour of play





Feedback on Open Play

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Open Play Feedback

► Positives

- Viewed as “more inclusive” and “accessible” particularly with players in younger age brackets, and who reported being newer to the sport
- Reported as promoting more “community building”
- Promotes easier access by allowing for drop-in and more spontaneous play, particular for working people
- More people can utilize the courts during any given hour
- Courts do not sit empty when reservations are not utilized
- Allows for people who are not in the “know”, or not part of the online community (FB/Instagram) or get the newsletters to access the courts without signing up



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Open Play Feedback

➤ Drawbacks / Concerns

- Reports of being left out of highly competitive games
- Feeling intimidated for new players to jump in and learn
- Does not allow for assured social time with friends
- Does not guarantee a quality and engaging exercise; does not guarantee one will get to play for those with limited time to exercise during specific timeframes
- Is harder for people with mobility or other limitations to feel welcome and safe
- Limited open play during the daytime hours; Holiday's should be all open play



Feedback on Reservation Play

Reservation Play Feedback

► Positives

- Promotes tight social interactions and community; ensures feelings of safety and welcome environment for players of varying abilities to engage and exercise in comfortable environment
- Ensures quality and engaging exercise; ensures play
- Only public court in the area that still offers reservations at no-cost
- 2 sessions per person/email per day



Reservation Play Feedback

► Drawbacks / Concerns

- Limits the number of players that can utilize the courts on any given hour
- Does not allow for reservations in the evenings; would like to have reservable play on weekends start at 12 instead of 1p.
- More consistent opening and rain communication so reservations are not impacted
- Cancellations are not being notified and courts go unused; when not reserved there is not a way to notify open play/public member so they can be utilized





Feedback on Online Reservation System

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Online Reservation System Feedback

► Positives

- Free, easy to navigate
- Players / community know how/when it works
- For some, allows consistent booking and access to courts



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Online Reservation System Feedback

- Drawbacks / Concerns
- Equity and Fair Access (Approx. 70–75% of responses)
 - The most prominent concern relates to fairness in accessing court time:
 - Difficulty securing reservations unless logging in immediately at release
 - Perception that a small group of users secures a disproportionate share of reservations
 - Concerns about system workarounds undermining fairness
- Reservation System Challenges (Approx. 60–65% of responses)
 - Users reported frustration with the structure and competitiveness of the system:
 - High-pressure “first-come, first-served” process
 - Technical or timing disadvantages impacting success
 - Interest in reducing the intensity of the weekly reservation release



Online Reservation System Feedback (Cont.)

- Consecutive Bookings & Court Hoarding (Approx. 45–50% of responses)
 - Respondents noted concerns about extended bookings:
 - Users reserving multiple consecutive time slots
 - Reduced turnover limiting access for others
 - Interest in capping consecutive reservations
- System Enforcement & Accountability (Approx. 40–45% of responses)
 - Users emphasized the importance of stronger enforcement:
 - Preventing duplicate account usage
 - Ensuring adherence to reservation limits
 - Increasing transparency and consistency



Observations on Current Online Reservation System

In addition to the comments and feedback from the community, staff analyzed the data from the current online registration system, Survey Monkey, from January 1, 2026 to April 29, 2026. Key findings are as follows:

- On average, 54% of all reservations are booked within the first 60 seconds of going live each Thursday at 7:30pm
- For all spots available, there are 111 unique users of the reservation system.
 - There appears that some users are utilizing multiple email accounts and will book the same court one after the other using different, but similar emails.
- Through analysis there are strong indicators of bot-like behavior in the bookings.
 - 20+ users can obtain the same courts, for the same days and times, week after week. What is more evident of bot behavior is that their reservations are time-stamped at the exact same second every single week - suggesting manipulation of the site and spirit of the system



Feedback on Future / Other Opportunities

Misc. Feedback

- Interest in System Improvements and Alternatives (Approx. 55–60% of responses)
 - There is strong openness to change to the type reservation system, and potentially a nominal charge or enrollment fee:
 - Support for piloting alternative reservation methods (e.g., lottery, rolling release)
 - Interest in hybrid systems balancing reservations and open play
 - General support for testing and refining the system over time
- Group Play and Informal Leagues (Approx. 30–35% of responses)
 - Feedback reflects mixed perspectives:
 - Some users value consistent group play opportunities
 - Others feel informal group control limits broader access
 - Interest in formalizing group or league time blocks



Misc. Feedback

- Feedback on Design of Entry Project
 - Additional shade, seating, & storage
- Membership Fee
 - Support of an annual fee to support operations or new reservation/administration system
- Additional or improved notification and communication processes





Areas Under Review for Possible Future Consideration

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Considerations

Part of one or more of the following considerations may be explored further for potential future implementation to address the feedback presented:

- **Consideration A: Adjust Reservation Limits**
 - Reduce total reservations per user per week
 - Limit consecutive time slot bookings
- **Consideration B: Modify Reservation Release Structure**
 - Implement rolling or daily reservations
 - Stagger release times to reduce peak demand pressure
 - Evaluate New Software
- **Consideration C: Increase Open Play Allocation**
 - Convert select reserved courts to open play during peak periods
 - Pilot expanded open play hours
- **Consideration D: Strengthen Account Verification**
 - Require unique user identification beyond email
 - Limit duplicate or alternate account usage
- **Consideration E: Pilot Hybrid Model**
 - Combine reservations, open play, and designated group play periods
 - Establish scheduled league or group-use time blocks



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Questions?