

Dear Mayor Fetzer and Sea Girt Borough Council,

After a great deal of thought and consideration, the Recreation Commission respectfully requests to pause the process of moving forward with the proposed paddle court project in Crescent Park. We feel it is in the best interest of the Borough to reevaluate alternate court orientations and locations even more thoroughly. The discord which has been stirred up within our community, by what is supposed to be a positive addition to our recreation facilities, is extremely disheartening and has led us to this decision.

We still believe and have shown how locating the 2nd court next to the existing court in Crescent Park makes the most sense practically, financially, and logistically, both for construction and play once completed. Crescent Park is just that, a park, meant for both active and passive recreation, as it has been for over 100 years. The impact to the surroundings by the proposed project would be negligible, as evidenced by the very careful consideration and feedback from our NJ Approved Forrester and Licensed Tree Expert, Bill Brash, and other recognized organizations within our town. It bears repeating, as per our Crescent Park Forest Stewardship Plan, Mr. Brash, a highly-accredited expert, states, "The installation of an additional Platform tennis court is expected to disturb 2500 square feet or 0.32% of the property in an area that is between the parking lot and the existing Platform tennis court. The minor disturbance is expected to have no impact to any Threatened and Endangered species."

It has also been suggested that even the most minor disturbance to the park could bring about a chain reaction of extremely negative consequences to the existing wildlife. Fortunately, we have an exact replica case study, in Crescent Park, to draw upon, which shows the precise effects should we decide to build a single additional court; The Borough constructed a single paddle court in Crescent Park in 2006, and after 16 years the wildlife and ecosystem remain intact, without any evident detriment from this additional recreation enhancement. Rather than hypothesize, we can look at this real-life example to show us exactly how a project consisting of 0.32% of park would actually impact the remaining portion.

Rumors and false information still abound regarding the proposed project. It has been said numerous times, and even written into petitions, that parking, a warming hut, and bathrooms are part of the current plan. This was never the case. Even the small viewing deck originally proposed had been removed in the final engineering as a compromise to reduce the footprint. Regardless, the notion of a "slippery slope" of more development to come has continued to be pushed without evidence. Although the majority of the opposition has been respectful, organizations, town officials and individuals doing outstanding conservancy work, and putting in countless volunteer hours, have been maligned in the process, which is truly shameful. We all need to be better and do better, as neighbors and members of a wonderful community, to value and respect each other.

That being said, the greater good of the town and harmony amongst our residents has to be considered as paramount, regardless of what the facts may be, especially with what should be a "feel good" project. The entire focus of the Recreation Commission is to enhance opportunities for exercise, education, health, wellness, and entertainment, as well as promote socialization, comradery, fun and friendships. Bringing the town together as a whole should be our biggest priority.

Based on the very strong opinions on both sides of the proposed project, including the ardent opposition by a segment of residents, it seems antithetical to our mission to continue with the project in its' current position without more intensely considering other orientations within Crescent Park with even less impact on the surroundings, or another location altogether.

We believe another paddle court will bring additional enjoyment and recreational opportunities for our residents. There is clearly both data and resident support for it. However, if an additional court can be achieved with minimal to no opposition from members our community, then that should be the goal. We respect all of the residents who have expressed dissent regarding the proposed location within Crescent Park, and their passion for preserving the existing forested areas. In short, we have been listening to their feedback, and feel we must take it into stronger consideration before proceeding. We too cherish the natural surroundings of Crescent Park and are working with other groups in town to help preserve and enhance it. We prefer to work together, rather than in opposition, to make our beautiful town even better.

We also greatly appreciate the enthusiastic support for a 2nd paddle court by current players, as well as community members that are simply in favor of increased recreational opportunities for year-round residents. We are committed to making a 2nd court a reality, in a location everyone can live with. We fully realize that you cannot please everyone, but we need to get closer to that ideal.

When we originally proposed the court, we took the time to speak with the closest neighbors, the ones who could be most impacted, if at all. By and large, the neighboring residents were very willing to communicate and compromise for the greater good of the community, and for that we thank them. We also consulted with many groups and experts on the potential impact of the project, with positive feedback. Nevertheless, what has developed since has been divisive and not in the spirit of what the Recreation Commission stands for. We hope that our residents can come together in unity to support a new proposal for a 2nd court, in the spirit of compromise. Our people are what makes Sea Girt the exceptional place it is. Our only desire is to add to their enjoyment of our already amazing town. There are certainly much larger issues than this to spend our collective energy and focus on, and we hope the focus can now shift to higher priorities in the town, and the world, as we work on potential alternate options for a 2nd paddle court. Surely if this is our biggest issue, life is good in Sea Girt!

Thank you for your continued support and understanding.

Respectfully,

The Sea Girt Recreation Commission