

Sports

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Tennis enthusiast asks council to rethink court resurfacing

➤ An additional cost of \$18,000 would add to 'playability' of courts and increase tennis activity in town, councillors hear

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

Rosemary Goodwin lives and breathes tennis.

There is likely nobody else in Niagara-on-the-Lake who has contributed the number of volunteer hours to the sport since she became involved with the NOTL Tennis Club at Memorial Park, building programs, membership and activities to new levels.

But it was as a tennis instructor, enthusiast and Rye St. resident that she spoke to councillors Monday, asking them to rethink a decision about

the resurfacing of the Rye Heritage Park tennis courts.

It would be a test project for work on the other aging courts in NOTL that will follow, she says.

Although Memorial Park is where the club-managed tennis courts are located, the Town has other open-access park courts built in the 1980s—one in Garrison Village, two in Rye Heritage Park, and two in the Lions Park in St. Davids. There are also two others in Virgil, which are newer.

With the exception of the newer courts at Memorial Park which are also slated to be replaced, the others are asphalt slabs, with lines on top—a quick and inexpensive way to provide a minimal service to residents, and common in many municipalities, Goodwin said.

"At the time there wasn't a good alternative. It didn't take long for the unprotected asphalt surface to oxidize and begin to disintegrate. Cracks

formed and weeks grew."

The courts have not been well-used, providing little motivation for the town to do maintenance, and minimal maintenance has led to even less use, she says.

"Playing tennis on unfinished asphalt courts is not a good experience." Afterwards, she says, "your body feels horrible. Your shins ache. Your back aches."

It will be a long time before you return for another game, she adds.

The current trend is to lay an acrylic compound on top of the asphalt, which protects it from deteriorating, and creates a surface with "playability," better for the footing, and offering a bounce of the ball that is true, she says.

It's also a safer surface, with less tripping and stumbling, and less wear and tear on the lower legs.

Goodwin says she applauds the Town for spending \$70,000 for a

new asphalt top coat at Rye Heritage Park, and the parks and recreation department for budgeting for resurfacing, but for an additional \$18,000, "we could have something really special."

She cites other municipi-

palities who have gone with the acrylic coating and have found the enhanced play experience leads to notably increased tennis participation.

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Rye courts could be test project for other aging park courts

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NOTL, she said, "is a population heavily skewed toward active aging. We are not the 50-plus type of previous generations. Sports such as tennis are ideal and are increasing in popularity. Access to quality facilities makes participation much more likely."

Goodwin is hoping the Town will use Rye Heritage Park as a test project, coming up with the \$18,000 in its budget to add the acrylic coating next May.

By the time the Town moves on to resurface the other aging courts in town, there will be data on which to base plans for those courts, she says, including usage, safety and increased lifespan for the asphalt base.

"See what a difference it makes. I think it will have vastly increased participation and activity, and why bother to resurface at all if not for increased participation and activity?"

In response to Goodwin's request, councillors agreed to ask Town staff for a report on putting an acrylic surface on the Rye Heritage Park courts.

Town parks and recreation director Clive Buisit will also include information and costs for the same surfacing on the other park tennis courts in town.

The report will be presented in time for council to decide if it wants to put money aside for next year to add the acrylic surface to the Rye Heritage Park courts.



Tennis enthusiast Rosemary Goodwin, seen here at the St. Davids Lions Park tennis courts, says as aging courts in town are resurfaced with asphalt a top layer of acrylic will help preserve them and make them safer and more comfortable for tennis players.

Photo submitted

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