

## Design for new pickleball courts almost ready

By Michael Zogg Today's News-Herald Oct 30, 2019 Updated 6 hrs ago

1 of 2



Scott Moore supervises a player practicing techniques.  
Courtesy of Dina Stultz

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New pickleball courts planned at Dick Samp Memorial Park may not be ready this winter, but the project is continuing to move ahead with preliminary designs expected to be completed in the next couple of weeks.

The park is already home to four outdoor pickleball courts, but Lake Havasu City is in the process of adding eight more courts along with additional parking, lighting, and improved access to the park itself. City Manager Jess Knudson said Shephard Wesnitzer Inc. has been working on designs for additions to the park for the last few months.

“A large part of that is collecting information and better understanding of the best way to design and construct these courts,” Knudson said. “So little things like the placement of the courts in relation to the sun, and accounting for wind breaks and things like that are very important. Those are things we can do now to ensure a better experience for the users.”

The project is being partially paid for by community donations from the Lake Havasu City Pickleball Association, which pledged to provide \$100,000 toward the total budget of \$713,750. The rest of the money will come out of the city’s general fund. LHCPBA Public Relations Chairman Rodney Windhorst said the group has already raised the promised funds and plans on officially donating the money to the city sometime in November.

Knudson said the fact the association was willing to contribute a significant chunk of the budget was a factor in getting the project on the city's Capital Improvement Plan.

"A large part of the selection process for the council and for the city in determining which projects the community wants is that we are constantly trying to identify demand," he said. "There is no better representation of demand from the residents than fundraising efforts to help subsidize the project."

Although it has reached its fundraising pledge, Windhorst said the group plans to keep raising money through its nonprofit, Lake Havasu Courts. The city paid for the first four courts at Dick Samp Park in 2017, but it was the LHCPBA that paid to put in bleachers and other amenities around the courts such as the slats in the fence that provide a wind break.

"We are continuing to build money in an account for courts – lights, bleachers, coverings, anything that we need," Windhorst said. "We will still have to start building up some funds for the other four courts down the road, too... We are not going to stop with the next eight, because we would like the full 16 courts there."

The master plan for the park calls for a total of 16 courts at Dick Samp Park, but the final four courts will need to be part of a separate project.

For now, Knudson said once a draft of the design has been completed it will be presented to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, as well as the LHCPBA for thoughts and input. Once the design is finalized, the city will start looking for bids.

"Our hope, at that point, is that those bids would come in under budget," Knudson said. "If they do then we are hoping for those courts to be constructed by the end of the fiscal year (June 30). But it all comes down to the resources and the cost of the courts themselves. Sometimes we have to solicit bids once, but if we aren't able to get any bids within budget than we might have to do it again to come within the parameters of our existing resources – it has to come in under budget."

Knudson said the project has already spent \$40,150 for the design phase, which leaves \$673,600 to complete the expansion.

The LHCPBA says there is a large need for more public outdoor courts in Lake Havasu City, and that need continues to grow. Windhorst, who is also the association's membership chairman, said the group currently has 210 official members. That is almost 70 more than the LHCPBA had at this time last year. He also noted that there are about 240 individuals on the association's mailing list who are not officially part of the organization, and even more pickleball players who have used the courts while passing through town without signing up for the association's email updates.

With so many interested players and just four public courts, Windhorst said it is not unusual for players to have to wait 20 to 30 minutes between games before it's their turn to take the court again.

"Now we have more people that want to play here, which is great. But we don't have enough courts," he said. "Four just doesn't work unless you don't mind waiting for half an hour. There is definitely a need here. These four at Dick Samp Park are the only four outdoor courts that we have."

Windhorst also said he believes that more courts could help bring additional visitors to Lake Havasu City. He said many pickleball players, including himself, look up pickleball facilities and organizations online prior to a road trip, and use that information to decide where to stop along the way.

"We kind of plan our routes around pickleball play, and other people do the same thing," Windhorst said. "They have to eat, they probably shop, so they leave money here. They don't just play pickleball and leave, they probably leave some cash here too."

There are several indoor courts in town as well, with four courts at the Aquatic Center and another four courts at The Ark Center. Neither of those courts are open every day, however.