

Local Resident Concerns about Pickleball Development at the Lake Club in Wilton

Many of the residents who live in close proximity to the Lake Club on Thayer Pond Road in Wilton have serious concerns about the proposed club application to develop a Pickleball program. While we all recognize the value of the club as several neighbors are active members, the following list summarizes our primary concerns:

- Overall Lake Club Charter
 - The Lake Club has been increasingly expanding activities beyond the scope of the original intent of the Club and to act as a responsible neighbor.
 - Increased later evening parties
 - Defoliation of trees
 - Increased lighting
 - Intent to construct additional pool (denied)
 - The Lake Club is Not a country club
- Sound Reports & Excessive Noise Studies
 - At the conclusion of the application, the Lake Club's consultant reportedly performed a one-day site visit where two members of the site staff to evaluated the layout of the site relative to the surrounding properties, and took sound measurements while both tennis and Pickleball games were demonstrated at a recreational level by two members of the site staff. Interestingly, they report that "These demonstrations have been incorporated as provided, and the suitability and typicality of each demonstration remains the responsibility of others."
 - The Lake Club's limited consultant report results differ significantly from many documented studies from reputable experts.
 - According to pickleballscience.org, "the sound of the pickleball striking the paddle is more than just a nuisance, because the perceived loudness level is ten times louder than ambient noise and five times louder than normal conversation".
 - According to Racket Sports World, studies have been undertaken to measure the sound levels associated with pickleball and average sounds have come to around 70 dBA. This scale of sound measurement is a weighted decibel scale which gives the relative loudness of sounds in air as perceived by the human ear. Exposure to sounds of more than 80 dBA needs to be avoided while anything above 90 dBA is considered dangerous to the human ear.
 - According to Amanda Levy, an audiologist at Professional Hearing Associates in Oceanside, a lecturer at California State University San Marcos and a pickleball enthusiast who lives in San Marcos: "The average noise level coming from a pickleball court is measured around 70 decibels at about 100 feet away from the court. This reduces to 64 decibels when measured at 200 feet away from the court. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration prescribes that noise exposure becomes dangerous when an individual is exposed to 90 decibels or greater for eight hours or more. For comparison, typical ambient neighborhood noise is about 45 decibels and average conversation is around 60 decibels. So is pickleball noise dangerous? No. Does pickleball add noise to the environment? Yes.

- According to a WUSATV exclusive report, loudness is just one component. Another is frequency, also known as pitch. Low frequencies sound low and deep: think the bass guitar in your favorite rock band. Higher frequencies can sound higher and sharper, like a whistle or that annoying microphone feedback at karaoke. "We're not equally sensitive to all frequencies, so we have a very nonlinear frequency response," said American University audio technology professor Braxton. Put simply, our ears are really good at picking up mid-frequency noises, even when they're relatively quiet. "A certain amount of sound pressure at those frequencies will actually sound louder than the same amount of sound pressure at a very low frequency or at a very high frequency," Professor Boren said.
 - "Following up on Boren's comments, we ran a frequency analysis on our recordings of our racquet-sport duo hitting tennis balls and pickleballs. Most of the noise made by hitting a tennis ball is in the low frequencies, below the zone to which we are most sensitive. A pickleball strike has a higher pitch, meaning our ears catch more of the noise it makes. It's that higher frequency that makes the clamor of pickleball clearer from farther away compared to tennis.
- The Lake Club application calls for significantly increased activity (4x) with significantly higher and different noise levels. Interestingly, in each case they cite "Because the sound frequency character of the noise differs between the two sports, a change may nonetheless be noticeable."
 - According the submitted proposal, lally acoustical consulting reports "Our impact analysis found that loudest individual Pickleball strike noises will be nearly the same relative to the measured background noise as the loudest tennis strike noises being replaced, at properties in all directions from the facility. Because the two strikes do not sound the same, the change may nonetheless be noticeable even if the overall sound level is similar. Despite this, sustained average game noise level is also expected to be nearly the same relative to the background noise in all directions when 4 concurrent Pickleball games occur, as compared with the single tennis game they will replace. This is a consequence of the significant distance to the nearest receivers in combination with the measured background noise level. Because the two activities do not sound the same, the change many nonetheless be noticeable.
 - "Receivers across Pond - The maximum overall sound level of each individual racket strike is not projected to differ significantly between tennis and Pickleball at the nearest property across Thayer Pond (39 Woods End Drive). These strike sounds will likely be similar in level to the current tennis strikes they replace on the proposed court. Based on the prevailing daytime background noise we measured along the pond, both tennis strikes and Pickleball strikes will likely remain audible (greater than 3 dBA above background) to the same degree before and after the proposed project. Because the sound frequency character of the noise differs between the two sports, a change may nonetheless be noticeable."
- There is a massive amount of reports, expert evaluations and documented technical evidence confirming the significant sound differences between pickleball and other sports (tennis). Instead of stringed rackets of the type used in tennis, a pickleball paddle

is a larger variation of the ones used in Ping-Pong. The exchanges in pickleball are much faster than those in tennis and more closely resemble those in Ping-Pong, leaving far fewer silent gaps between ball strikes than in tennis. And the challenge isn't just to down the sound of the paddle hitting the ball but also the noise of celebrating players in a game that's quite social in nature.

- Pickleball-related legal disputes are also occurring with homeowners' associations. Irvine, California, attorney Nicholas Caplin said he's represented members in more than 10 residential communities with claims against associations that allowed new or converted pickleball courts. Caplin noted, however, that in most cases the noise was found to exceed noise provisions in HOA codes.
- Conflicts
 - Particularly in the past 5 years, there has been a significant increase in the number of instances where the Lake Club has violated their own charter, incurring increased complaints. My fellow neighbors will supply direct commentary.
- Quality of Life
 - Residents in our community have chosen to live in our area to enjoy peace and quiet. To quote the real estate community, "Boasting rolling hills and lush scenery, Wilton is ideally located in Fairfield County near train service and highways, making it perfect for residents, businesses and tourists alike. Wilton is ideal for those who desire privacy, fresh air and plenty of space to create their lifestyle." We live in a quiet community – not a Country Club.

Summary

- We submit the Lake Club is overstepping its privileges as a 'zoned neighbor' by requesting the Wilton P&Z Board to accept an application which will certainly alter the peace and quiet the residents currently enjoy. A one-day site visit from a NYC consultant containing multiple liability loopholes should not be considered evidence of current and future sound levels, particularly as their results vary widely when compared to the many studies from reputable experts across the country.
- We also know the realities of the popularity of pickleball, and the anticipated growth estimates. However, The Lake Club is NOT a country club, despite what some of the newer Lake Club board members may think. As responsible neighbors, we would never consider building our own pickleball courts as it would seriously impact the comfort and lifestyle of our community. We expect the Lake Club give us that same respect, so we respectfully request Wilton P&Z Board to reject the application.