

## Donaldson Run Civic Association

June 16, 2023

Jane Rudolph  
Director, Department of Parks & Recreation  
Arlington County  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Jane:

Thanks to you and your staff for meeting with DRCA board members last week to discuss the proposed restriping of the Marcey Park tennis courts for pickleball as well as tennis court use. As discussed, we undertook to get back to you with our further thoughts on this proposal. We understand that the County Board has not voted on or otherwise dictated this choice for addressing increased pickleball demand, but has left it to staff's discretion.

As we discussed, DRCA does not believe the public engagement process for selecting Marcey Park as a pickleball destination provided any real opportunity for input from our neighborhood. First, prior to staff's notice to me in April of this year, I do not recall seeing any specific proposal to locate pickleball courts at this location. Second, our neighborhood would have had no reason to have suspected any such plan, since staff consulted with DRCA extensively on the design and use of the recently redesigned facilities at Marcey Park, during a process that specifically rejected pickleball use there. Third, after our meeting, we were distressed to learn through a general e-mail that, notwithstanding our undertaking to get back to you with our further thoughts, you have announced that this restriping will begin around June 26. This appears to underscore your determination to disregard any input from our neighborhood in making this decision without regard to the unique problems here.

To reiterate our concerns, this is not from DRCA's perspective a question of tennis vs. pickleball use. Nor is it a "not in my backyard" issue. Plain and simple, the proposal (together with the matrix relied upon to identify this venue) fails to address the already existing multiple public uses of this area. Particularly post-COVID, even without new pickleball users, ***Marcey Park, Potomac Overlook Park, and the Donaldson Run Pool already create an overflow of parking and traffic at all such locations and along Marcey Road.*** This problem results from the combination of a variety of factors: increased use of Potomac Overlook, reopening of a new facility at Marcey Park, regular tennis and exercise classes and matches at the courts, rentals of the Potomac Overlook facility at the top of the hill, and a variety of weekday and weekend swim and dive meets at the neighborhood pool resulting in spillover from the pool parking lot.

The increased use of Potomac Overlook already led DRCA three years ago to request parking restrictions along Marcey Road, because cars fill up the limited parking spaces at the tennis courts and other Marcey Park facilities and at Potomac Overlook, and end up occupying both sides of Marcey Road up to the top of the hill. This creates serious traffic obstacles already on that street. Our efforts to have the

Transportation Department address that issue in 2020 led them to conclude that, apart from the bend in the road approaching the tennis courts, their criteria did not warrant any further parking restrictions.

As we understand it, DPR believes that these problems will not be significantly aggravated by adding pickleball to the already growing existing demands for these various facilities concentrated at the end of Marcey Road. This view seems inconsistent with the extent of the current pickleball craze. Nor do we believe that the County can rely on the tennis court reservation system to manage that increased demand. While from our experience tennis players do not seek to reserve courts for more than the 60 to 90 minute times prescribed by the County, there is no reason to believe that the reservation system (or unreserved time) cannot be used by pickleball players to result in dramatically increased use of the facilities.

We appreciate that the County Board has directed the staff to find an interim solution to the recent expansion of pickleball demand. DPR has responded to this direction by taking a number of steps to increase pickleball court availability throughout the County. We have thought about ways the County might accommodate that goal at Marcey Park consistent with these existing overflow uses, but we have concluded that there is no manageable way of doing so short of imposing special limitations on this new use that we believe would be inappropriate.

Thus, before rushing in to extend pickleball use to Marcey Park, we would ask you to pause in light of these existing overflow uses to examine whether it is truly necessary to do so at this time. Such a pause would allow the community to weigh in on the many significant issues at play at this particular site, including parking, traffic, noise, impact on tennis use, and use of the adjacent park. We would be happy to revisit this issue in light of the County's experience with its other efforts to accommodate pickleball use, and its commitment to look for additional indoor and outdoor venues (including office vacancies) and private as well as public facilities.

Thank you very much for the chance to raise DRCA's concerns with you.

Sincerely yours,

Bill Richardson  
President  
Donaldson Run Civic Association

cc: County Manager  
County Board Members