RESOLUTION ASKING THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION AND THE CITY COUNCIL TO PROHIBIT PICKLEBALL WITHIN FIVE-HUNDRED FEET OF PRIVATE RESIDENCES

Mānoa Neighborhood Board No. 7

September 4, 2024

WHEREAS, each person in this state has the constitutional right to “a clean and healthful environment, as defined by laws relating to environmental quality, including control of pollution” (Article XI, Sec. 9, Environmental Rights); and

WHEREAS, noise pollution is a recognized and scientifically established public health concern, which presents a danger to the health and welfare of the population; and

WHEREAS, according to scientific research, outdoor pickleball is known to impact the acoustic environment of the area surrounding pickleball courts, in a way that is different and more frequent than other forms of outdoor recreational activity, such as tennis; and

WHEREAS, based on acoustical science, the sound produced by a pickleball paddle upon impact with a pickleball is classified as an impulsive noise, which is in the frequency range of sound that human hearing is most sensitive to; and

WHEREAS, impulsive sounds are known to create a greater nuisance than other forms of sound because they are similar to sounds that contain important information about the environment and by design readily attract human attention; and

WHEREAS, research shows that impulsive noise such as the sound produced by pickleball makes it difficult for people to relax, concentrate or sleep soundly because each impact draws attention and creates distraction; and

WHEREAS, exposure to noise that disturbs sleep or concentration is known to produce a range of diagnosable illnesses and disorders; and

WHEREAS, the playing of pickleball creates repetitive impulsive noises of 72 DBA (equivalent noise level to that of a busy freeway) for adjacent residents of Manoa Valley District Park, including Manoa Elementary School, making it 8 times louder and 1000 times more intense than the original intended uses of Manoa Valley District Park’s basketball, tennis and volleyball courts; and

WHEREAS, the playing of pickleball exceeds the maximum allowable noise level of 55 DBA (using “fast” measurement) set by statute in Hawaii Administrative Rules 11-46,

hundreds of times per hour and thousands of times per day, thus creating a noise nuisance and public health issue for nearby residents and school children; and

WHEREAS, in order to come into compliance with the state's maximum allowable noise of 55 DBA from the current 72 DBA at private residences 200 feet away, pickleball courts would need to be located at least 300 feet further away from homes, which is estimated to result in a 6 DBA decrease for every 100 feet distance in order to achieve an acceptable noise level of 54 DBA (i.e., 72 - 18 = 54 DBA).

WHEREAS, pickleball creates 90-120 DBA of noise at its source and the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu outlaw noises greater than 80 decibels 10 feet from the source for more than 5 minutes cumulatively, unless the Department of Parks and Recreation sponsors or issues a permit for the event, it is a violation of Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 10-1.2.b.8 to allow pickleball to be played at Manoa Valley District Park; and

WHEREAS, given the topography (open land), proximity (200 feet) and elevation of homes above and adjacent to the courts, sound mitigation would be impractical if not impossible (requiring a 20-30 foot wall around the courts); and

WHEREAS, there are 195 other public playing spaces designated for pickleball on Oahu, including 10 courts within a 5-mile radius of Manoa Valley District Park; and

WHEREAS, basketball, tennis and volleyball players are being increasingly displaced by pickleball, the fastest growing sport in the USA; and

WHEREAS, there have been numerous successful lawsuits, bans and laws against pickleball across the country due to the growing recognition of the excessive and problematic noise it creates for nearby residents; and

WHEREAS, there have been many expensive court closures and failed sound mitigation efforts across the country; and

WHEREAS, pickleball when played too close to private residences can decrease quality of life, the quiet enjoyment of private property as well as property values by up to an estimated 20%; and

WHEREAS, in order to comply with state law, pickleball courts should not be located within 500 feet of private residences; and

WHEREAS, the city's current regulations do not address the noise and nuisance associated with pickleball or similar sounds nor do they authorize the Department of Parks and Recreation to properly address the influx and impacts of pickleball in its parks and adjacent neighborhoods; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Department of Parks and Recreation should prohibit pickleball from being played within 500 feet of private residences.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Council should codify this 500-foot prohibition.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation of the City & County of Honolulu, the Mayor of the City & County of Honolulu, all members of the Honolulu City Council, the Governor of Hawaii, and all members of the State Legislature.