

TO: Saugatuck City Hall Clerk and Saugatuck Parks and Public Works

FROM: Julie Sowa [REDACTED]

RE: Village Square Plans for Tennis Court Renovation

DATE: December 28, 2025

Dear City Hall Personnel,

I disagree with your approach to making the Village Square Tennis Court into a multi-use court.

I am a lifelong Saugatuck resident and have kept my family cottage since 1927. I grew up taking tennis lessons downtown at the age of 6 in the 1960's (there were 2 back then) Later, in the 1970's. I taught tennis lessons for the City of Saugatuck and facilitated an annual tournament for numerous children and adults for four years. Last summer, I also was an Assistant Tennis Instructor for the City of Saugatuck. Over the years, those courts have provided hours of fun and exercise for many in the community along with creating lifelong friendships when playing tennis.

I believe that the downtown court that remains should be dedicated to only one sport, specifically pickleball. The suggestion to try to make dual-purpose use is impractical. There are many problems with that plan. First, the court dimensions and net height of pickleball and tennis are very different. This causes confusion and disruption in timing and stroke strategies. In addition, the idea of taping the courts leaves residue on the surface and can lead to tripping hazards.

It is my view that the solution of a dual purpose represents a cheap fix to a highly visible recreational site in downtown Saugatuck. I feel that new pickleball courts would be a valuable way to showcase recreational opportunities for our community. Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in America and can be played by all ages with very little expense to participate. Meanwhile, the courts at the high school should be properly maintained for the public to safely enjoy. The maintenance of the courts is long-due, and I would like to invite you to walk inside the tennis courts to properly see the problems.

I have written to Ryan Cummins and to the School Superintendent suggesting that the downtown court be converted to 1 or 2 dedicated pickleball courts (2 courts can easily fit on the one tennis court) and that the long-neglected tennis courts be improved by resurfacing the courts, replacing the ageing nets and providing water access and proper signage for use (i.e.. no rollerblading and trash).

Please include my correspondence in your upcoming early January City Council meeting and provide a copy to the Parks and Public Works Department.

Cordially,

Julie Sowa

2025 Saugatuck Assistant Summer Tennis Instructor and Avid Pickleball Player

