

\$15 Million Plummer Park Phase 2 Project Approved Following Public Support

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE - A \$15 million construction agreement for Phase 2 of Plummer Family Park and new lighting at the park's pickleball courts were recently approved by the Edwardsville City Council. Several Edwardsville residents and park visitors voiced their support for expanding the park with more pickleball courts, sand volleyball courts, and more at the last council meeting.

One More Game (OMG) Pickleball Club member Jim Stout read a statement from Club Chair Dale Miller, who could not attend the meeting. While the Edwardsville pickleball

scene and the club's membership have both increased over the years, Miller said it's actually getting "too popular," as the club struggles to find available courts during prime-time pickleball hours. His proposed solution is to double the number of courts at the park, making it a "regional destination" and driving tourism revenue.

"Adding 12 pickleball courts to Plummer Family Park will make this great facility into a regional destination, the largest facility of its kind in the Midwest," Stout read from Miller's statement. "There will be a positive financial impact - will be spending money in our city that would not be here if not for the 24-court pickleball facility located in Edwardsville."

Fellow OMG Pickleball Club member Bill DeFries said the club received a letter from USA Pickleball Assistant Regional Director Jim Burger, who oversees the "Middle States" region of Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin. Burger said if Edwardsville doubled the number of pickleball courts at Plummer Family Park, it could host regional tournaments and draw visitors from multiple states.

"An additional 12 courts would at present meet the requirements - which would be 24 courts - for application for a USA Pickleball Regional Championship," Burger wrote in the letter. "To estimate the economic impact to your community is difficult to assess - however, the last regional championship in St. Louis, held in 2022, drew over 800 players from 34 states."

Mollie Morrissey, an SIUE student and president of the school's Pickleball Club, said her club regularly struggles to find available courts between local families and the OMG Pickleball Club. She also said more pickleball courts and lighting would allow the SIUE Pickleball Club to play against other nearby schools with pickleball clubs.

"We're in a fortunate area, because we have schools like WashU and SLU and other schools that have clubs that we can play against," Morrissey said. "I was able to organize a tournament with the SLU pickleball team and we started at about 4 on a Friday night, because people have classes and travel and jobs and stuff ... we were going two out of three sets and only got to do one of them because the lights started going dark.

"I think the expansion of courts would be really nice, and also the lights would be a really big benefit for our club and anyone else."

Kendall Paulice, head volleyball coach at SIUE, said she would like to see six sand volleyball courts installed at the park to give her team somewhere outdoors to practice what she called the "fastest-growing collegiate sport." Paulice said she and the

university have talked about adding beach volleyball to their athletics lineup, since the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) already has some six-member beach volleyball teams, but the main roadblock has been finding a location for the new courts.

“One of our big hiccups is, where would we train? We couldn’t host a tournament - to host a tournament, you need at least two courts, if not three, to have an Ohio Valley championship,” Paulice said. “Having somewhere locally that would provide an opportunity for us to have a beach volleyball program would be really exciting, I think, for the community and to get more people involved.”

A few more people voiced their support for the expansion of Plummer Park for multiple reasons and sports, including baseball and soccer. Ultimately, the City Council voted to approve an agreement with Byrne & Jones Construction for Phase 2 of Plummer Family Park in the amount of \$15,902,190. This includes construction costs for four large baseball fields, 12 additional pickleball courts, six sand volleyball courts with bleachers, a playground, a maintenance building, and various other improvements, according to meeting documents. Completion is expected sometime in 2025.

Also approved was a contract for sports lighting and installation for the Plummer Family Park pickleball courts in an amount not to exceed \$185,870. The new lighting will cost the city significantly less, thanks to \$60,415 fundraised by OMG Pickleball Club and \$100,000 in grant funding secured by State Representative Katie Stuart. \$25,455 will be paid by the Edwardsville Parks and Recreation Department.

Mayor Art Risavy said he’s passionate about seeing the community active, making park improvements like these a high priority. He said these improvements at Plummer Family Park are just one small part of a multi-year, multi-million-dollar plan for the city to acquire and preserve greenspace in the future.

“It makes me happy to see kids and adults active in our community, and I think this is something that’s so important, and it’s going to see so much use,” Mayor Risavy said. “I’m just so grateful for the support from the community as well.”

A full recording of the Edwardsville City Council meeting is available at the top of this story or on the [City of Edwardsville Facebook page](#).