

Molina, Natashja

From: Hillary Tutko <hillary.tutko@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 18, 2026 12:19 PM
To: Conservation
Cc: Strehle, Julie; Palmer, Shannon
Subject: Re: 8 Court Pickleball Proposal at 25 Bare Cove Park Drive

May 18, 2026
Re: 8 Court Pickleball Proposal at 25 Bare Cove Park Drive

Dear Hingham Conservation Commission,

It's unfortunate the Conservation Commission is unwilling to have a broader, noise-related discussion, especially with the courts 100 ft from a Certified Vernal Pool, within 100 ft of wetlands, and 48 ft from an ACEC (1 of only 30 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern in the state of MA).

Noise is the main concern of pickleball because it is incredibly loud, a noise that disturbs the peace, and is classified as a nuisance noise. There's plenty of credible research out there about the impacts of sound (and artificial light) on wildlife. I have sent the research to the Town Conservation Agent twice.

To my understanding, light, although not specified in the by-laws similar to sound, was cited as one of the reasons turf fields and lights could not be installed at Ward Fields because of its proximity to the wetlands and the impacts light will have on wildlife.

The (8) proposed pickleball courts, (3) of which are within 100 ft of the wetlands, will produce over 80,000 high pitched "pops" per day. Each pickleball "pop" is described as a gunshots little brother. It is a noise that is created and comes to a peak at 2 milliseconds just like gunfire (*Chronicle, Pickleball Opponents Seek Noise Relief, May 2025*).

The sharp, high-pitched "pop" of a pickleball paddle striking a hard plastic ball acts as an acoustic stressor. Due to the irregular sound, impulsive nature, and shared frequencies with alarms, it triggers the endocrine system's fight-or-flight response, causing elevated heart rates and cortisol levels (*Pickleball Sound Mitigation, 2023*). If you're birding at Bare Cove Park, would you bring a pickleball and paddle? No, because the birds would fly away due to the noise.

This area, while disturbed, has gone largely unused for a significant amount of time. The surrounding area has fully acclimated to low human activity and now with the proposed courts, **there will be a significant amount of human activity during and post-construction**. The "degree of isolation," which is important to the Conservation Commission and the wetland itself, will go from marginal to zero.

Construction is prohibited near and around wetlands during nesting season. According to the *USDA FSA* website nesting season in Massachusetts is from 4/15 thru 8/1. Pickleball is going to produce a nonstop noise equivalent, likely much worse than construction noise April through November after they are built according to the *Hingham Acentech Sound Study from January 2025*.

How can the Conservation Commission allow (8) pickleball courts to be within 100 ft of wetlands and a Certified Vernal Pool April through November but not allow the construction to happen during nesting season April through August? How does that work?

The only solution to reduce the impact the noise pickleball will have on the wetlands and wildlife habitat and change in activity is to reduce the number of courts.

Here are a few key pieces from the current wetland's regulations:

- 1.3 - wetland values include the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat

- 19.1 - starting on page 42:

*Isolated land subject to flooding may provide important habitat for amphibians, particularly during their breeding period, and some rare species. It may also provide important habitat for wildlife and in particular waterfowl. **The degree of isolation from human-caused disturbances is a desirable feature of land subject to flooding, which is a critical element for the protection of wildlife, rare plant and animal species.** Both bordering and isolated land subject to flooding are aesthetically attractive in a natural condition and provide opportunities for **passive recreational activities** such as hiking, wildlife-viewing, or bird watching. **Land within 100 feet of land subject to flooding is significant to the protection and maintenance of land subject to flooding and therefore to the wetland values of this land.***

*b) Wetland Values and Presumption of Significance. Whenever a proposed project involves removing, filling, dredging, altering or building upon land subject to flooding or within a **minimum distance of 100 feet of such land**, the Commission shall presume that the land is significant to the protection of the following wetland values: protection of public or private water supply; protection of groundwater; flood control; erosion and sedimentation control; storm damage prevention, including coastal storm flowage; prevention and abatement of water pollution; protection of fisheries; **protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat**; protection of rare species habitat, including rare plant and animal species; **protection of recreation and open space**, protection of agriculture; and **protection of aesthetics**. **These presumptions may be overcome only upon a clear showing that land subject to flooding does not play a role in protecting one or more of the wetland values given above.** **Except as authorized by the Commission, no activity or alteration shall be permitted within 100 feet of a vernal pool, whether it be certified or uncertified but accompanied by credible evidence of its viability as a vernal pool.** The 100 foot zone around the defined vernal pool boundaries shall be known as "Vernal Pool Protection Zone." Isolated Land Subject to Flooding is protected under the Hingham Wetlands Protection Bylaw.*

- 19.3 - starting on page 47:

*Wetland vegetation provides habitat for a wide variety of insects, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and birds. **The degree of isolation from human caused disturbances is a desirable and aesthetically pleasing feature of a vegetated wetland, which is a critical characteristic for the protection of wildlife.***

Land within 100 feet of a vegetated wetland is considered to be significant to the protection and maintenance of vegetated wetlands, and therefore to the protection of the wetland values of these Resource Areas.

*b) Wetland Values and Presumption of Significance. Whenever a proposed project involves removing, filling, dredging, altering or building upon a vegetated wetland or within a **minimum distance of 100 feet of a vegetated wetland**, the Commission shall presume that the vegetated wetland is significant to the protection of the following wetland values: protection of public or private water supply; protection of groundwater; flood control; erosion and sedimentation control; storm damage prevention, including coastal storm flowage; prevention and abatement of water pollution; protection of fisheries; protection of shellfish; **protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat**; protection of rare species habitat, including rare plant and animal species; **protection of recreation and open space; and protection of aesthetics. These presumptions may be overcome only upon a clear showing that the vegetated wetland does not play a role in protecting one or more of the wetland values given above.***

I had a nice conversation with the Conservation Commission during a site visit, and it was explained to me that the Conservation Commission can only rule within their jurisdiction and the 100-foot wetland boundary is within their jurisdiction. The regulations highlighted provide plenty of jurisdiction and clear boundaries to reduce the number of pickleball courts within the 100-foot wetland boundaries to protect the wildlife habitat from the harmful pickleball “pop” as outlined in the by-laws.

Thank you,

Hillary Tutko

22 Hillside Terrace