

11/26/2024

Dear Council:

I write to you in relation to the 2025 Budget meeting and our neighbourhoods request for a basketball net in our park.

I understand you have heard from Councilor Hamilton, and some of my neighbors from Green Gate Blvd and I too would like to have my comments on record in support of a motion brought forward by Councilor Hamilton to use the cities reserve budget to have a proper basketball net installed in our neighbourhood park.

I am one of a few home owners in the neighbourhood who provided a basketball net at the end of my driveway for children to play with. The net on my property did not belong to me, but rather a neighbour [REDACTED] from one street over, Green Gate Blvd. The net was initially on his property, but very unfortunately their neighbours across the street took up issue with the basketball net and decided to involve the police in order to remove the children. It should be noted that many of these children are visible minorities, many are new Canadians from South Sudan (a country experiencing extreme famine and civil war) the Philippines, Vietnam and various other African Countries. I fully believe that the decision made by these neighbours was racially motivated, and it is shameful. The police were reluctant to act, as was bylaw because they did not see an issue. However, the neighbour continued to persist.

After the police and bylaw became involved, I offered [REDACTED] to move his net to my driveway for the children to play with. The net was moved to my house sometime around May and lived there until the end of August. Each day we came to expect the same group of children after school, and each day they came from 3:30-6pm then from 6:30-8pm. The children began to know us, and we began to know them and from there we built a community of upwards of 100+ children who would play basketball on the net located at my house at [REDACTED] or at the net located at [REDACTED] which is owed by my sister and brother-in-law.

Out of an entire neighbourhood consisting of over 1000 homes, the only place for children to play basketball are at 2 private nets provided by two sisters, who saw the need in the community and responded. Our children are all under the age of 8, and do not play with the basketball nets as they are too small, however they have come to expect and enjoy the kids who come and play on the nets. Unfortunately, in August, bylaw started to receive complaints about my basketball net and as a result we were required to have it removed.

I will always remember the day I had to go out and tell our basketball kids that they would not be allowed to play at my house anymore due to complaints to the city.

Its curious a complaint was made, since I personally went to each neighbour on the street before placing the net and explained the situation / asked for their support/ provided my personal number in the event there was ever a problem (there never was)

The park facilities available to the children in this neighbourhood are severely lacking. If you happen to have a child above the age of 8 there are no age-appropriate activities for them. Each evening around 6 pm there is a mass exodus from people's homes, and by 7pm the park is filled with 75-200+ people. We have issues with adults sitting on play equipment to have conversations with one another while children wander around in the grass, which is full of holes and dog poop. The park itself is too small, but there is also no opportunity for sport for the older children. This past summer the city did provide the park with two wood posts for volleyball but that has never been used.

I am appealing to council to hear our plea for a basketball net in our park. Currently the closest public basketball net is located at Moffat Creek Public School. In order for children to access this school they would first have to cross 4 lanes of traffic on HWY 8, this is an accident waiting to happen. There is currently ample room in our neighbourhood park to used, seems like a slam dunk?

The lack of sport amenities for our children is shocking for the size of this neighbourhood and the amount of taxes collected. Council approved mass development on the East side of Galt- however it just appears to be homes nothing else. I do understand we are going to be getting a new Sports complex in our area, but to be fair at the rate Cambridge is growing we already need two more Sports Complex's to support the population growth.

Without proper sports facilities for our neighbourhood kids, we are telling them we don't care. We are telling them they don't matter. We are telling them to stay inside and rot, or go outside and find trouble. We did not have a single problem with any of the kids that came to our respective homes this summer. They are good children, and they deserve to feel like they matter in their community and this summer unfortunately many people made them feel like they didn't belong- and you can help them make them feel like they are apart of this community- with a simple basketball net.

Thank you

*Danielle Ratford*

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