



## Ashland tennis court crack-fill is a short-term fix

By Tran Nguyen Ashland Daily Tidings

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Local tennis players recently volunteered to help filling in cracks that “were big enough” for people to trip on them in Hunter Park tennis courts, but the fix was only skin deep as the root of the problem lays below the surface.

“Right now, all we can do is patch work,” said Luther Lyman, a local tennis player and one of the volunteers helping in February to fill in cracks at the courts.

The effort came after Lyman and other local tennis players persuaded Ashland Parks and Recreation to provide them with material to save the courts, Open Space & Outer Parks Supervisor Jason Minica said.

Minica said parks spent roughly \$2,000 in materials to fill up cracks in four out of eight courts. The remaining surface will be filled in early summer “because it’s still too cold,” Minica said.

“They’re just temporary fix at this point,” he said.

Serving the community for at least 35 years, the eight tennis courts in Hunter Park have become the go-to location for the retiree tennis community, Lyman said.

“(The fillings) don’t particularly make the court better to play on,” Lyman said, adding there is still a crack left unfilled that is at least an inch wide. “That is just to save the courts.”

Ashland Parks and Recreation rebuilt the tennis courts in Hunter Park in 2004 and resurfaced the courts with asphalt in 2012, according to Interim Parks Superintendent Jeff McFarland. The 2012 resurface cost the city roughly \$54,000, and the cracks started to show roughly two years after the installment, according to meeting minutes.

Cracking happens due to the natural tendency of asphalt to shrink as it ages and weathers and as it expands and contracts as it heats up and cools off, parks staff explained.

In August 2016, staff presented an option to replace the courts with post-tension concrete surfaces with padding that would run between \$45,000 to \$60,000.

APRC voted to not allocate any capital funding to fix the tennis courts in its 2017-19 biennium budget based on its approved goals, which include the Daniels Meyer pool, south dog park and more pickleball courts, among others.

“We don’t have the budget for it right now,” APRC Chair Mike Gardiner said. “We’re doing the best with what we have.”

The group, which Lyman said has around 30 members, testified at Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on Jan. 22 to advocate for more allocation and to find a long-term solution for the courts.

“The courts are an asset for people in Ashland,” said Dave Ferguson, one of five local tennis players who spoke at the Jan. 22 meeting. “We can fill in the cracks, but it’s not the long term plan. ... There’s no long-term plan for the courts.”

McFarland said he could see funding for a long-term solution for Hunter Parks tennis court become a priority the next biennium budget, but a suitable solution has yet to be determined.

“The thing is the cracks will be there, so the question is which fix would be the best over time for the courts,” McFarland told the commission at its meeting on Feb. 12. “I think we should try to study that a little bit more.”

Minica presented an option to install grounded fiberglass that would cost around \$161,000 and guarantee a more enduring surface than regular filling. Commissioners told him to further study the option at the meeting.

Lyman said he tried to offer a synthetic turf solution (a sand-filled synthetic grass tennis surface) that he himself installed in his home in Shasta to the commission, but he said the idea was ignored in 2004.

“I’d love to be involved to come up with a long-term solution,” Lyman said. “Because without that, we will keep running into the same problem.”

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