

Meeting Minutes

Tom Petty Park – Parking Lot Expansion Neighborhood Workshop

Public Discussion – July 2, 2025

Summary

A virtual meeting was held on July 2, 2025 from 6-7pm to review the 60% Tom Petty Parking Lot Expansion Plan Set with stakeholders. Below are the primary discussion points.

Attendees: See attached list

General Discussion

1. Rachel Mandell, the Project Manager for the City of Gainesville, provided an overview of the project, to include the classification of the park, park improvements that are already underway as well as the proposed parking lot expansion. She also discussed the project timeline.

2. Question – Has there been a traffic study? I'm questioning the need for more parking spaces.

Response – The City has not conducted a formal traffic study to date.

3. Comment – The park has shaded walkable and likeable routes. It has 81 existing parking spaces and it's on an existing bike route and bus stop nearby. Is there a need for additional parking? I worry about the need. If a traffic study hasn't been done I'm concerned about that. How many parking spaces are needed at Tom Petty Park?

Response – We could certainly consider conducting a formal traffic study. Roxy Gonzalez – park users are parking illegally during baseball games. We're getting complaints from the neighborhood. With the increase of the pickleball courts there is not sufficient parking during baseball season. We've looked at the demand from Northside Park's pickleball courts. We made sure that the field dimensions will still accommodate flag football. We need to be able to accommodate both baseball games and pickleball. We need park users to be able to park safely.

4. Comment - I agree with the comment about a traffic study- I rarely see a problem with parking and I'm in the park daily. It seems there's more and more concrete going into this park. Grassy overflow parking sounds like a better idea. More numbers would be great to justify the parking lot need. Even better would be a traffic study. Perhaps there should be fewer pickleball courts if the parking wasn't sufficient.

5. Comment - What about stabilized grass parking? Thank you - I would like to see that grassy overflow parking option explored.

Response – PRCA would be OK with grass parking but they'd still need a fence between the field and the parking lot to prevent balls from rolling into the parking area.

6. Comment – The plan that you submit was incomplete. Why would you bring this forward now? Why would you reduce the size of the field? With all these phases of development what is going to be added next? Can you please verify the measurements of the parking lot?

Response – It's on us to be more transparent with future improvements.

7. Comment – I've been coming to Tom Petty Park since 1989. I use the dog park. I've had many chances to observe the parking in the parking lot. It's a very rare occasion when I've seen the parking lot full, even with baseball, youth football and tennis underway. I think that pickleball is a fad. I think you're going to a lot of effort for something that will not remain popular. It's a lot of paving and it will take a lot of effort to remove.

Response –

8. Comment – I agree with the speaker that this was not transparently communicated. Feb 2024: "The field size will remain the same (approximately 160' x 280') (44800 ft²)." This parking lot will halve the field size to 150' x 150' (22500 ft²). July 2024: "Due to the need to keep the overall development footprint as small as possible to minimize impacts on wetlands and existing trees... additional paved areas are not planned for this project."
9. Question – When will the parking lot be completed?

Response – Right now we have construction beginning in early 2026 and completing in spring 2026.

10. Comment – I have supported this project since the beginning. I would have liked the covered pickleball courts. Cars are a geometric problem that we can't solve. You're adding 50% more parking. The neighbors won't like people parking in their neighborhood but there is a significant amount of on-street parking

Response –

11. Comment – I echo what the previous speakers have said. It doesn't seem to me that the parking lot was part of the original plan. Did you do any kind of study to bring about this last minute change? Expected traffic volume, etc.? What is the justification for this?

Response –

12. Comment – I am not able to unmute but I agree with the last speaker. I am a homeowner in the neighborhood and I am very sad about taking up a large part of the grassy area with a parking lot. Folks can park in the neighborhood if there is a need for more parking. I live on the border of the park, and I am not worried about overflow into the neighborhood. I moved here so that I could be next to the park. I have used the park for many years, for jogging. Thank you.

Response -

13. Comment – I'd like to see you ask for a vote of those who are in attendance - a vote on whether increasing the parking area by 41 additional spaces is something people support doing or not. I think you'll find overwhelming opposition to the extra parking. If so, would that have any impact on what is planned? If public opinion has no impact on the decisions, it would raise the question: Why are you holding these meetings?

Response -

14. Comment – It's important to preserve our access to greenspace and nature. Please look into pervious paving alternatives.

Response –

15. Question – Are there any tree impacts?

Response – No, there are no tree impacts. There might be some pruning which would need to be done by a certified arborist.

16. Comment – We need to make sure that we're not constructing parking for only peak demand. People can park on side streets. The playground at Westside Park is very nice.

Response -

17. Comment - I agree with waiting to see if the need is there after the pickleball courts have been in for some time.

Response -

18. Comment – I worked for a Parks Department for a number of years. I appreciate you being transparent but this last phase of the project has been disappointing. I think people have wanted to have more options for providing feedback. A parking lot is not what was originally intended with the passing of the original Wild Spaces & Public Places sales tax. I appreciate what you all do. You need to give people a chance to have input on this.

Response -

19. Question - The baseball fields were closed for almost a year so when did Roxie do her study and if so why wasn't it brought up in original plan?

Response -

20. Comment - it's interesting to hear of all the funds being allocated for parking/pickleball when the playground equipment which is not covered gets dangerously hot this time of year. That should be priority

Response -

21. Comment – I have lost faith in the Parks and Recreation Department because of this process. It was not transparent.

Response -

22. Comment - Most discussion is telling us what is going to happen which has been an ongoing problem with this department. Having a meeting close to a holiday further illustrates the fact that wild spaces doesn't want to hear from the public and would rather be free to do whatever they want.

23. Comment – I don't think the new parking lot is going to solve the problem.

24. Comment - Yes, people bike and walk through the park on the multiuse path all the time, exiting onto 16th Ave. How would the parking lot extension impact this?

Response – Striping will be added to the crossing of the multiuse trail through the parking lot.

25. Question - Does this mean the project is on hold now that you have heard so much public dissatisfaction?

Response – We'll take these comments/questions to our leadership and the design team to determine what our next steps are.

26. Question – Will we receive the recording? I will request the recording.

Response -

27. Comment - Parks needs assessment study: <https://www.gainesvillefl.gov/Government-Pages/Government/Departments/Parks-Recreation-Cultural-Affairs/PRCA-Needs-Assessment-Update> PRCA Needs Assessment Update Single Page (recommended for mobile) Two-Page Spreads (recommended for computer or tablet). Per the study there was no issue with parking.

28. Question - Can you speak to any possibility of this plan not going forward? Is this a possibility?

Response – I don't know that at this time.

29. Comment - Why can't we wait and see what parking needs we will have? then if needed, add grass parking. Who do we put this idea to? I would love to hear these other people speak.

Response – That is something that we can absolutely consider.

30. Comment - The goal should be to make this a nice green space, not to pave our beautiful park with a

lot of green space.

31. Comment - Yes, data and transparent decision making processes are essential.