



Dear WHAC Club Members,

Happy holidays to all! I write to update you on the state of the club and to describe in more detail some of the projects on the horizon, particularly the pickleball and tennis project (hereafter, the “courts project”).

We will host an informational member meeting on **Wednesday, January 8, at 6:00 pm at the Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church (3525 Bee Caves Rd.)**, to describe and discuss the plans in more detail. Please mark your calendars and join us!

Year in Review

2024 was another interesting year for the club. Just a few highlights:

1. We launched a **summer camp** for kids 6-12, which was a tremendous success and long overdue. The camp, conceived and run by two of our members and assisted by the tennis and swimming staff, included swimming, basketball, and tennis. What better place to send your kids on a hot June day? Look out for signups in February for next year’s camp – spots will likely fill very quickly.
2. We upgraded some aspects of the club, including **new lighting** to the pool deck, an update of the **electrical system**, **new landscaping** around the outside of the club, and a new online **reservation system** for swim lanes, classes, and courts. Look for more of those improvements in 2025, as we undertake an evaluation of the buildings and grounds.
3. We added pickleball nets and striping to the lower tennis court. We experimented with open play on Fridays and hosted our first annual **pickleball tournament** to great success. Congratulate the champs in the various categories and mark your calendars for Labor Day weekend (the club party) if you want to take the 2025 club title.
4. The board voted to ease **geographic restrictions** on membership in the club. Historically, membership has been restricted to those in Eanes ISD even though those boundaries do not match perfectly with the club’s natural membership. For example, some areas, such as Stratford Dr, Bee Cave Woods, Zilker, etc. are geographically closer to the club than some areas of EISD. The initial geographic limitation was required by a deed restriction which expired in 2000, and after some deliberation, the consensus of the board was that the restriction was no longer helpful.
5. Most of the energy on the board has been devoted to implementing the long-awaited **“courts project.”** But more on that below.
6. We’re interested in hearing ideas for 2025. Among other things, members have mentioned **fitness** and **basketball programs**, merchandise (**snacks, coffee, tennis/swimming gear**), and **beautifying** the grounds. Surely this list just scratches the surface.

Status of the Courts Project

Discussion among the board about updating and expanding the courts goes back to at least 2000, according to club historians. I see that each of the last six board presidents has predicted that the coming year would be the one in which the project breaks ground. Well, this IS the year! After extensive design and re-design and collaboration with the city council, the board of adjustments, and the city’s development staff, we are awaiting only the approval by TCEQ of the drainage and water treatment design. Once that comes in (perhaps February?), we will be

issued a permit and be ready to start construction which is expected to take 10-12 weeks. In an ideal world, the courts would be ready in time for summer camp.

The Objectives of the Plan

Why is the club expanding space for pickleball and tennis? It depends on whom you ask. In my view, the project is motivated by at least the following 10 objectives:

1. **Make structural changes.** The state of courts right now is, frankly, of serious concern. Appearances aside, there are major structural problems and simply resurfacing them is only a stopgap solution. The courts' foundation is poor (evident in the many dead spots in the upper court), the tar berm between the courts is sub-optimal, the fences are rusted, and the root structure of our massive live oak (which will stay) all require a more comprehensive approach. Arguably, the necessity of rebuilding the courts provides a good opportunity to expand and accomplish the other nine objectives listed below. For one thing, we are able to shift the courts toward Wallis slightly and save even more space by removing the berm between the two. In short, the courts have served us well since they were laid down in 1976. Fifty years later, a well-designed extension and upgrade positions the club well for the foreseeable future.
2. **Accommodate pickleball.** Currently, the club's pickleballers play on the basketball court and on the lower tennis court. This fall, the club even added a pickleball court to the upper tennis court. At times, pickleball has been in progress on *every* court, perhaps at the expense of basketball and tennis. Note that adult and junior basketball is in the works! Our goal is to provide space for pickleball without encroaching on basketball and tennis. Also, the hybrid pickleball/tennis courts will allow for the flexibility that is imperative for a club with more than 400 member households;
3. **Increase the utility of the club** for the community and its members by upgrading and expanding programming and facilities for tennis and pickleball;
4. **Fulfill an "8 to 80" plan** that includes activities for members and families across age groups (proverbially, those ages 8 to 80, though we have many active members well outside of that range!). Currently, the club primarily serves younger children. Pickleball and tennis are popular across the life cycle and will give more members a reason to spend time at the club;
5. **Enhance the communal**, "third-place" feel of the club by developing areas to gather before and after pickleball/tennis. Currently, tennis and pickleball players gather in the parking lot. Teaching pros, players, and spectators should have a place to hang out and meet their neighbors. Maybe even go for a swim after some time on a hot tennis court?;
6. **Foster more programmed play** at the club by providing adequate facilities for lessons, clinics, teams, tournaments, summer and holiday camps, and social tennis/pickleball events;
7. **Allow for recreational play.** Programming (lessons and clinics) typically competes with member and family court time; added courts will allow sufficient court time for both member reservations and programmed play;
8. **Integrate the court and swim** components of the club; the courts are currently accessed only outside of the club. With the new design, they would be integrated during club hours while still being accessible during non-club hours;
9. **Enhance the club's beauty** by nestling the courts within newly planted trees and shrubs. The courts, on three tiers, will fit the hilly landscape and be embedded in a natural setting that blends with the neighborhood. We will lose mature trees, but the landscape plan calls for adding "impact" trees and dense shrubs to be placed in optimal locations. The goal is a much-improved landscape with more high-quality trees in the

right places. The current plan is to open up the northwestern part of the club, which has historically been fenced off, as woodland for walking, communing, and exploring;

10. **Control drainage.** Drainage in Rollingwood is a major concern. The new courts, even with the added surface, will reduce runoff flow by more than 10% compared to the status quo and will filter runoff through a rain garden;

Design of the Courts

The plan's architects and engineers, the board of directors, and the club's racquet community conceived four courts spread across three tiers (a bottom tier with two courts and two upper tiers with one court each). The courts will allow for the potential of both tennis and pickleball. The number of courts striped for both sports will depend upon the interest of club members in the ensuing years.

More detailed information about the design is on the "tennis" page of the website (www.whac.org) There you'll find a set of construction plans submitted to the city as well as a more descriptive and visual document (the "handout"), which includes some renderings that illuminate the plan more clearly. We'll continue to update the handout, especially for the January meeting. We'll also post and update the handout on the bulletin board at the club entrance. A physical model of the project, built and donated by a high school member of the club who is a budding architect, is also on display at the club entrance.

The courts will be accessible from the club itself when the club is open and accessible from outside the club through a digital entry system. At the entrance to the courts will be a space for players and the teaching staff to gather. The concrete patio will offer a nice view of the lower two courts. The courts feature "California corners" which push balls back to players and decrease the amount of impervious cover.

The club is working with the US Tennis Association (USTA) and established tennis court installers to ensure that the courts' construction and features meet best practices.

Funding Plan and Financial State of the Club

Overall, the club is in a very good financial situation. Inflation has affected our cost structure somewhat, but our costs, compared to other clubs and facilities, are low. Maintaining and staffing the pool continues to be by far our major cost; nearly *all* of our members' dues typically go to the costs of running the pool. The tennis courts, by contrast, return a modest *profit* from a set of fee-based programs and low overhead. Even with more frequent maintenance (typically, courts are resurfaced every 6-8 years), our estimates suggest that profits from tennis and pickleball programs will more than double with the new courts. So, from a financial perspective, investing in the new courts makes good sense, even though we are decidedly *not* in the business of turning a profit.

The funding of the project will be roughly similar to the structure used for historical improvements to the club, such as the clubhouse renovation of 2014 and pool renovation of 2018. The club will finance the project cost with a long-term loan. We prefer a loan to a one-time membership assessment. A long-term loan makes sense for the same reason that school bonds do; rather than having only current members fund the investment through a one-time assessment, a loan spreads the cost across both current and future members for the life of the loan. Our loan from the 2014 clubhouse renovation will be paid off in 2029, and the current loan will take its place. We will preserve the club's capital reserves for other possible improvements and we will retain sufficient funds to cover at least six months of operating expenses at any given time.

What about sponsorships? The plan that we have adopted would fund the courts project in its entirety. However, many members have offered to contribute financially to the project. We appreciate the generosity and spirit of those suggestions and we understand the personal satisfaction of contributing to the development of the club – a gem in the community if there ever was one! For those who love the idea of helping to build the club and can afford to do so, we respectfully welcome your contribution, especially since we are aware that not everyone has that ability.

We recognize that member contributions were an important part of the clubhouse renovation in 2014 – we see the names on the bricks every time we enter. So, we *will* launch a sponsorship campaign in 2025 and we *will* find an appropriate and dignified way to recognize families and businesses that contribute in a location on the new courts. I note again that sponsorships will not be strictly necessary for funding the courts, but they will be undoubtedly useful. They will help to pay down the loan, reduce any pressure on future dues, and ensure that we have the capital to take on other needy projects.

If you know right now that you will want to contribute something to the club in some way and at whatever level, please let me or any of the board members know of your general interest. Understanding the membership's latent sponsorship desire is helpful as we plan the campaign and think about future projects.

2025 Dues

One element of the year-end letter is a reminder to pay your dues. Given the financial plan that I outlined above, the dues *this year* are a bit higher – \$1,912, to be exact. The dues cover the costs of running the pool and its management, the expected payments on the loan for the capital improvements, and other, smaller expenses. More precisely, roughly 61% of the dues will cover the costs of running the pool (lifeguards, pool manager, electricity and natural gas, maintenance), 10% will go to buildings and grounds, and 19% will pay for the capital improvements, with another 10% in miscellaneous expenses.

We might note that dues for the club are considerably less than those at comparable clubs and we plan to keep them that way. WHAC has a simple, subdued vibe that we want to retain and maintain. By way of comparison, dues at other swim/racquet clubs in town are at least twice as high. And most of those clubs do not have WHAC's valuable shareholder structure, in which dues help to maintain each of our investments.

Communications

This yearly letter (with dues notice, guest passes, etc.) is a longstanding custom. However, we are updating our communication strategies to keep you better informed about projects and events. Namely:

1. Our **weekly email** is our principal way to reach you about club events and programs. For some members, we do not have updated (or in some cases *any*) email addresses. If you have *not* been receiving these emails, contact Amanda Howe at whacmanager@att.net to confirm the current email addresses for any members of your family who wish to receive them.
2. We are also in the process of updating the club's **website** (whac.org). Early in 2025, we'll go live with a fresh look and more accessible information for members and prospective members.
3. **Annual meeting.** We are reinstating the annual member meeting which lapsed during the Covid years. The meeting will be held during the club party on Labor Day weekend, which will allow you to attend with a burger or taco in hand. Note that the January

meeting about the courts project is simply an informational meeting. Again, please join us.

4. **Connect with a board member.** A great way to find out what is happening or to suggest ideas is to contact a board member – either one you know, or simply by writing board@whac.org. Comments, suggestions, and ideas are welcome. And if you *do* have ideas and energy, you should consider *joining* the club's board. As many ex-board members know, it's a real *working* board, but the work is rewarding and a great way to get to know eight other neighbors.

All that to say that the state of the club is strong. I know that the country is more polarized than ever and that sometimes, even our little town's politics can seem that way. I'm relieved that the life of the WHAC has so far been removed from that strife. And that peace and good will is pretty critical to the work of building the club if board members are to continue to donate their time at the expense of work and families. Board members have to make decisions collectively, take our losses, and honor decisions from previous boards. We do not always agree with one another, but we respect each others' opinions and those of the membership.

So come out on January 8 and tell us how the place could be better, write with any ideas, and/or let us know if you want to contribute your time or resources. Happy holidays!

Sincerely,



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