



# Royal Oak

## Agenda

### Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Thursday, April 3, 2025, 7:00 p.m.

M/M Senior Center

3500 Marais Avenue, Royal Oak, MI 48073

Anyone planning to attend the meeting who has need of special assistance under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is asked to contact the city clerk's office at 248-246-3050 at least two (2) business days prior to the meeting.

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	<b>Pages</b>
1. Meeting Called to Order	
2. Approval of Agenda	
3. Approval of Minutes Recommended Motion: Motion to approve the minutes of the March 6, 2025 Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting.	
4. Public Comment	
5. Reports	
a. Staff Report – Nicole McEachern	
b. City Commission Report - Commissioner Brandon Kolo	
6. Business Items	
a. Royal Oak Sandlot League Update No action necessary. For informational purposes only.	3
b. Southeastern Michigan Pickleball Association Update No action necessary. For informational purposes only.	5
c. Royal Oak Football Club Update No action necessary. For informational purposes only.	7
d. Kensington Play Structure - Location Discussion No action necessary. For discussion purposes only.	8
7. Items Not on the Agenda	
8. Upcoming Events	
• The Great Marshmallow Drop, Friday, April 18, 10 am. We're thrilled to collaborate with Oakland County Parks and Recreation to bring this beloved community event to Worden Park. 15,000 marshmallows will be dropped from a helicopter!	
• Thursday, April 24 at 10:30 am: Celebration at Fred A. Erb Arboretum:	

Come see the latest enhancements to the arboretum in honor of Arbor Day!

- Park Cleanup, April 26 & 27. We are seeking volunteers to help us celebrating Earth Day by taking part in the annual park cleanup!
- Rock the Block, May 15-16. Kickoff event will be held at Senior Center. This is a partnership with Habitat for Humanity. 24 homes in Royal Oak will receive exterior home repairs!

9. Adjournment

10. Next Meeting: Thursday, May 1, 2025



# Royal Oak Sandlot League

## Royal Oak Parks and Recreation Advisory Board - Community Engagement and Vision

Thursday, April 4, 2025

The Royal Oak Sandlot League, established in 1959, is a non-profit local tee-ball, softball and baseball organization that is committed to providing girls and boys from ages 4-18 the opportunity to play in a fun and structured environment. The organization has over 900 active participants managed by an all volunteer board and volunteer coaches. The season is primarily mid-April thru the end of July. Tournament teams compete throughout the year and league clinics taking place December-March.

A key guiding principle of the league is that “Every Kid Plays”. This means at any skill level, physical ability, financial means or engagement with other sports. While our focus is to create an environment where everyone can enjoy fun on the diamond, it does create challenges. Thankfully the Board and its partnership with the City of Royal Oak have taken a number of steps to limit any challenges that comes with growth may have on our players, coaches and families.

Recently the Sandlot underwent major changes in the way it operates, the opportunities it provides and adjustments to play on the field. Key areas included: Branding, Financial Stability, Rules of Play, Softball, Skill Development, Tournament Teams/Events, Game Experience and Community Engagement.

**Branding** - From a new logo design, custom uniforms for the players to take home to increasing awareness to players, parents and coaches of our offerings, we are positioning ourselves to not only be a destination for the rec diamond sports player but also a home for skills development and higher level competition.

**Financial Stability** - Critical for all non-profits is to have a sound financial base that allows for the ability to provide resources to coaches and players, account for unexpected costs, maintain a fair registration rate and support players that may need financial assistance. A major benefit to our partnership with the City of Royal Oak is the free field use and field preparation. This directly benefits all participants with our ability to keep registration fees as low as possible.

**Rules of Play** - In 2024, all divisions were adjusted for 2-year age gaps (then High School) to closer align with National Governing Bodies and local communities. This has resulted in better play on the field, increased confidence among players and standardized rules of play.

**Softball** - This continues to be a challenge for us and many communities around metro Detroit. But this is an area we are taking head on and are committed to helping provide a high level, fun, engaging place for our girls to play. Support from the High School, City and local coaches have helped us stop a decline, but growth is now a priority.

**Skill Development** - The opportunities we provide coaches and players to improve their knowledge and skills on the field have changed over the last two years. We now offer multiple coaching clinics, 4x as many off-season training sessions, all new in-season skills lessons and invested in a new Director of Training and Development.

**Tournament Teams/Events** - While we pride ourselves in maximizing the rec sports experience, we are growing a hybrid model for our most competitive players. The uniqueness to the 7 teams we have is that they still participate in the rec league while also competing at high level tournaments around the State. We have also reimagined our Stars Tournament that brings in over 50 teams to Royal Oak for a 3-day competition.

**Game Experience** - “Between the Lines” is ultimately what we program. We are continually making improvements to the experience of our game action from rules changes, elevation of the umpires we hire, incorporating more “travel” level players to the game, increasing games played vs. neighboring cities and great fields to play on. The city of Royal Oak has done a tremendous job supporting us by preparing fields for games each and every day from May - July

**Community Engagement** - We realize to maximize the impact and experience we can provide our players/coaches/families, we need a full commitment from our entire Royal Oak community to see our visions a reality. Key steps have happened in the last 18 months including:

- ROHS/ROMS - Partnerships with the High School and Middle School softball and baseball staff and players to help with our clinics and overall player development
- Royal Oak Leprechauns - Collaboration with our “Big Brothers” at Memorial Park to allow our families to enjoy the games all season long. This includes free clinics, teams of the game and free tickets to each and every ROSL player.
- Neighboring Communities - Continuing to expand the games we play in neighboring communities and assisting these groups in funding, training, umpiring and finding a home for all players.
- City of Royal Oak - Aligning with our vision, addressing challenges and celebrating wins with the entire team has also been a focus over the past 18 months. Clarity on games, schedules, field needs and more has allowed for us to maximize the use of the diamonds throughout the city.

So far, the changes have resulted in higher registrations and engagement. Last year our registration numbers were up 20% and on pace for another increase this year. Training registration numbers have increased 50% with softball clinics up over 90%.

While we are excited about the growth of our league, it does create challenges where partnering with the City isn't just an option but a necessity. Playing diamond sports requires us to be on a specific field that requires continued maintenance, linings and care. We will do all we can as an organization to partner with the city to maximize space available for tee-ball, softball and baseball play.

The future is bright! Neighboring leagues have asked us to incorporate them into our model, families love the rec side of sports while also providing skills development and we have many ideas to expand programming not only in the summer but year-round as well.

While we are excited about the growth, changes and path we are on, we know there is much more that can be done. The Sandlot family is excited to be a positive experience for all we impact in our community.

## **Southeastern Michigan Pickleball Association (SMPA) and the City of Royal Oak: A Partnership for Community Growth**

### **Introduction**

Since 2010, the Southeastern Michigan Pickleball Association (SMPA) has been an integral part of Royal Oak's recreational landscape, transforming unused tennis courts into vibrant pickleball complexes that attract players from across the region. After gaining status as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization **run entirely by volunteers** in 2016, SMPA has worked alongside the City of Royal Oak to maintain and improve these courts, organize programming, and host events that contribute to the city's reputation as a pickleball hub.

Continuing this partnership between SMPA and the City of Royal Oak would solidify and streamline this longstanding collaboration, ensuring sustained benefits for the community, local businesses, and city recreational programs.

### **History of Collaboration**

The roots of this partnership date back to 2010 when Royal Oak resident Pat Sullivan, with community and city support, led the conversion of dilapidated tennis courts into the Whittier Park Pickleball Complex. This initiative expanded in 2014 when SMPA volunteers, using tournament proceeds and city assistance, transformed additional tennis courts at Upton Park into pickleball courts. In 2017, SMPA funded a volunteer-driven effort to fully repaint and restore the Whittier Park courts, ensuring their long-term usability. In the summer of 2024, severe wind damage resulted in the collapse of fences at Upton Park, rendering the courts unsafe for play. Since SMPA has a regular presence at the courts, they notified the city immediately and worked closely with DPS to reorganize court usage. Additionally, SMPA fully funded and replaced all of the nets at Upton Park with professional, custom-sized nets to accommodate the non-standard net post spacings, further improving the playability and longevity of the courts. Over the years, SMPA has facilitated programming, maintenance, and improvements, ensuring that Royal Oak's courts remain premier facilities for both residents and visitors.

### **Benefits of our Continued Partnership**

#### **1. Sustainable Recreation Management**

SMPA plays a crucial role in organizing programming for the city's 15 pickleball courts, including:

- Hosting **mixer events** that foster community engagement.
- Managing **structured ladder leagues**, with over **500 recreation enthusiasts annually**.
- Ensuring court availability through well-balanced scheduling at Whittier and Upton Parks.

#### **2. Economic Impact on Royal Oak**

- The **annual Royal Oak Classic Pickleball Tournament** attracts 200-300 players from **across the Midwest and Canada**, bringing foot traffic to **Royal Oak's businesses**.
- Local businesses, recognizing this economic benefit, have actively supported SMPA by providing **discount coupons for players, and other amenities**.
- Tournament participants and visiting players contribute to local restaurants, hotels, and shops, generating revenue for the city.

### 3. Volunteer-Driven Facility Maintenance

- SMPA members **maintain court cleanliness**, including **leaf removal, weed control, and net repairs**.
- SMPA **coordinates with the city** for larger projects such as resurfacing and fence repairs, which SMPA has funded for years.

### 4. Relief for City Resources

- SMPA funds and maintains **portable restroom facilities** at Whittier and Upton Parks, benefiting all park users.
- SMPA proactively monitors court conditions, scheduling timely repairs before issues escalate.

### 5. Enhancing Royal Oak's Recreational Identity

- Since 2010, Royal Oak has been a leader in recognizing the growth of pickleball. A continued partnership would reinforce its reputation as a premier pickleball destination.
- SMPA's **proven track record of reliable programming and facility upkeep** aligns with the city's vision for sustainable recreational offerings.

## Conclusion

Continuing the partnership between SMPA and the City of Royal Oak would ensure the **further success and growth of pickleball in the community**. SMPA's dedication to **programming, maintenance, and community engagement** makes it an invaluable partner in maintaining and enhancing Royal Oak's pickleball facilities. By leveraging volunteer support, tournament-driven economic benefits, and responsible facility management, this partnership will uphold **Royal Oak's legacy as a leader in recreational excellence**.

SMPA is committed to working alongside the city to ensure **a thriving, accessible, and well-maintained pickleball environment** that benefits residents and visitors alike.

3/21/2025

## Royal Oak Football Club Report

Dear Parks and Recreation Advisory Board,

Royal Oak Football Club is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit community-based soccer organization started in 1976 with the ambition of providing soccer opportunities to all kids in Royal Oak and the surrounding metro Detroit area. The club has Recreational, Premier, and Elite soccer programs for players of all levels.

We provide access to soccer for approximately 3,000 youth with the opportunity to play organized soccer at all levels. The youth are residents of Royal Oak, Troy, Birmingham, Clawson, Ferndale, Huntington Woods, Madison Heights, Oak Park, and other surrounding communities. We provide over 2,000 games and 4,000 practices a year resulting in over 405,000 individual youth hours of exercise and wellness opportunities to children between the ages of 4 and 19.

Our staff includes:

Director of Coaching - Abdoulie Jallow

Director of Operations - Megan McClellan

Director of Recreational Soccer - Tori McIntosh

We elect a 7 person board - with positions staggered every other year (4 and 3). Our annual members meeting is in early December to review the Club's year, elect open board positions, and discuss the future. We maintain bylaws and our premier teams play in the Michigan State Youth Soccer Association, Michigan Youth Soccer League, Great Lakes Premier League, and National League Conference. Our recreational coaches are volunteers and typically parents of players.

ROFC relies on the City's parks and green space for games and practices, and works closely with the Parks and Rec and Department of Public Services to reserve and maintain the fields.

Sincerely,

John Linz

President - Royal Oak Football Club

**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: March 20, 2025

TO: Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

FROM: Nicole McEachern, Parks and Recreation Director

**SUBJECT: Kensington Play Structure - Location Discussion**

In FY 22-23, the City acquired a spacious Kensington play structure for \$133,666, made possible by a 50% matching grant in partnership with the Gametime manufacturer. Originally, this structure was intended to replace the existing one at Lockman Park. However, following valuable feedback from residents who expressed their desire to retain the current structure, the decision was made to explore alternative locations. The new play structure is currently in storage, ensuring its readiness for future installation.

Previously, \$39,000 was estimated for design and bid assistance in the 25-26 FY, along with \$260,000 for construction in 26-27 FY. However, the City Manager has expressed an interest in prioritizing the design process in the current fiscal year, allowing us to move swiftly toward the bidding phase.

Three parks have been identified as potential sites for the structure. These parks will be assessed with several factors in mind:

- **Neighborhood Demographics:** Changes to the neighborhoods, based on the latest census data (see chart below), will be considered to ensure the structure serves the community effectively.
- **Condition of Existing Equipment:** Staff are in the process of evaluating existing play structures, with safety as our highest priority. The average lifespan of commercial playground equipment ranges 8-15 years, with some lasting longer with proper maintenance and high-quality materials.
- **Space Requirements:** The Kensington play structure's size (73 ft x 54 ft) will require adequate space for installation.
- **Park Classification:** As a substantial feature, the structure may attract significant visitors, so a community park is recommended as opposed to a mini or neighborhood category park. Zucker Park is equipped with dedicated parking, while VFW and Red Run Park offer street parking options. These will be important considerations in the final decision.

We are eager to gather input from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. Next steps include engaging an engineering firm to assist with design and bidding processes

Park Name	Percent Population 18+	Percent population aged 65+	Percent Population Under 18	Playground Installed	Current Structure Age
Isabel & Myron Zucker Park	83.7	21	16.3	2001	24
VFW Park	87.4	18.9	12.6	2002	23
Red Run Park	83.1	13.8	16.9	2002	23



