

Riad Davids Interview with Lester Kiewet
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[Lester Kiewet] Riyad David, Ward Counsellor for Ward 53, that's the Pinelands area. Just a very quick check up, what's happening there in Pinelands. Any reports of any impact from the storm this morning?

[Riad Davids] Hi Lester, you know the first storms a couple of weeks ago, the city always said that's a test run, so we had quite a lot of flooding across the city, and that identified a lot of the hotspots, even though you do pre-winter readiness, it identifies a lot of hotspots. Those were cleared, so we're much, much better off. We do have some power outages, which is to be expected, because our underground to, or our overhead to underground electrification started in the thatched area, which, because there's bigger risks there, and in the areas that it hasn't been done yet, some overhead cables, and of course Pinelands has a huge amount of trees. We have some sparking and some powers out, but not major flooding in any of my five residential areas.

[Lester Kiewet] Okay, thanks for that. But the reason why I asked you to come on this morning, is that last Thursday we spoke to people, a group called the Friends of the Pinelands Oval, because they're opposed to the plans for the Pinelands Hockey Club to lease, what they say is 60% of the lower Pinelands Oval[sic] to install an AstroTurf, they say this is a historic and a protected public green space, it's used for a wide range of people, the cricket clubs, the athletic groups, the frisbee players, the dog walkers, etc. And they say that they're opposed to a single entity taking up up to 60% of that space. That raises the question, who has access to public open space? What currently is the status of that lease application and the AstroTurf proposal?

[Riad Davids] Okay, so the status is, everybody must still comment. The closing date is the 12th of May. And then the city will have a look at all the inputs. You know, that is why every lease, the city signs hundreds every year, on all the different sporting codes and different leases and city buildings. So it just goes through that process.

But maybe we should correct a few things. So if they say historic, historic is hockey's been there, the Pinelands Hockey Club was established in 1937. And they've been there since the early 80s, for about 45 years, and they are still there, they just can't play there. So the historic and the history, you know, hockey has always been there. And I always say to them, if it was cricket, where international cricket said you can only play it on some other type of surface, I would have been for supporting cricket. If it was any of the other sports, we do the same.

And remember, so Pinelands have over 40 parks and public open spaces, we're very blessed in Pinelands. There are actually 31 areas that actually have the name "park" behind it.

And we are busy commencing with the public participation process - that will be our first dog park. And we'll have many, many more dog parks where people can go. So nobody's losing anything.

And then as well as you know, the lease is for 60%. But hockey, the actual field will only take up 20%. And people will still have access. It's just that with hockey, as you know, with a ball, it's not like when we used to play street cricket and hockey, you have another person, he's not actually in the game, but he's in the game because he's catching the ball a couple of hundred meters down the road. So you do fence off and box off that portion, but that is only 20%. The lease is actually for the entire bottom section and some of the sides because of all the developments which they envisage, but nothing's approved.

The only thing that they are asking for at the moment is for the lease. Once they have the lease, they then need to go to investors and say to investors, we'd like to put Astro. If investors come along and say yes, then that's another application to the city. So there's a lot of hype going around, but at the end of the day, the facts are hockey's always been there. In fact, they're still part of the FMC. They pay their subs, they do their dues. They just can't play at home. They didn't dissolve in 2015 when they couldn't use it anymore. But they are still a very, very active club.

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[Letser Kiewet] How does the city go about deciding whether a space is underutilized or it's considered surplus when residents who've spoken to us say they insist while it's actively used every single day, whether it be someone just taking a walk or walking the dog or the Ultimate Frisbee players. How do you decide whether something is utilized or not?

[Riad Davids] Well, so this is the first thing is it won't stop anybody from walking a dog. It won't stop Ultimate Frisbee and it won't stop cricket. You know, this is the whole thing about it is we're talking about there are two fields there. There's a top oval and a lower oval.

Hockey will be placed on the lower oval. And if you look at the size of the oval or cricket pitch compared to hockey, you know, as I said, the lower oval where the actual hockey pitch will be that will be fenced and boxed is only 20 percent of the entire area. So nobody is going to be stopped.

What you had is, you have cricket, you know, wanting to occupy the entire space and not considering another sport where hockey was always there and they have always

been there. They're still part of the FMC. As I said, they pay their dues and everything.

Hockey is also a massive sport. You know, it's gender 50-50 in South Africa, worldwide it's also 50-50. It's a massive school sport. And we have one of the best hockey teams, junior and senior on the world stage. And we shouldn't be denying it. You know, they've been playing at Langa, they've been using Oude Moulen and they've been using different fields, but they stayed true to Pinelands hockey. And all they said is, we will be back when we get an opportunity to put Astro.

Now, I can tell you, as you know, I am involved in sport. The amount of application to the city for Astro is astronomical, you know, to use the same word. You need Astro. The advantage of Astro is it's all-purpose, it's all-weather and you can really sweat the asset.

And as I said, you know, the big thing to look at is we have over 40 parks and public open spaces. I have a community in Maitland South who have to cross Berkley Road if the children want to play in the park. So they don't have a park. They have no public open spaces. They have no amenities. Here we have a plethora. We have so many that some of them stand empty for quite a long time. There are visual parks and a few people walk on them. We're not denying anybody. And people can easily, instead of people trying to keep hockey out, embrace hockey, look at ways that it can be even better for everyone. And then many people can decide, you know what, instead of us meeting in exactly where hockey was, we can use the area around it. Or, you know what, we don't like the sound of kids hitting the hockey ball. There are 40 other parks and public open spaces we can go to.

[Lester Kiewet] Riad, we're running out of time. We're heading into news. But I have to ask you, in 30 seconds, I see that Checkers has now withdrawn its application for a liquor license. Something that you must be pleased about?

[Riad Davids] The community is pleased. In fact, it's one of the funny things. We're still getting objections coming in. You know, in fact, since we've had that, we've had one letter of support and about 30 objections. And I say, by the time Chequers is open, we probably have received more objections to the liquor license than we received before the closing date. It's actually one of these things that won't go away.

[Lester Kiewet] I have to leave it there. I really appreciate it.