



**December 2023**

**Newsletter**

**President's Address**

It has been a busy year. We recently established another pickleball (PB) venue at Burke Racquet Club primarily for players that could not sign up in September. It only took a few days to reach our goal of regulars and sub players. They start that venue on January 8. Karla Vernon has taken the new position of Operations and Planning Chairman for Pickleball. She helped start our pickleball program by being one of our first PB captains.

Doug White, our President Elect, has been busy working with our senior staff on many issues. His suggestions have helped in solving problems. It is obvious he will be ready to take on his role as President as of January 1, 2024. See his following article. By the end of December, I will have served five years as President. I enjoyed my role working with our members trying to run our programs as efficiently as possible. It was a challenge to keep running our tennis play during the pandemic. Adding PB to our organization was also exciting and challenging. During my first four years, Joe Wittling our Chief Information Officer (CIO), was the hardest worker on the Board of Directors. He kept an outdated automated system working by doing “work arounds” to get the job done. He also provided advice to me that made my job so much easier. He deserves our thanks for a job well done.

During this last year our new automated system was created and operated by Catherine Ngo-Wilde. In her role as the new CIO, she trained a team of workers on how to operate the new system without any delays. She has laid the groundwork for our future automation needs. My role in the new year is to be on the Board of Directors as the “Former President”. I will assist Doug on whatever duties he wants to assign me. I hope to still see and interact with my friends in Golden Racquets.

Hope everyone is enjoying the leagues and can attend upcoming social events to meet more GR members. To all of you it has been a pleasure to serve in the capacity as President...and a joy to accomplish our goals of continuing to increase membership and adding pickle ball after the tough years of the pandemic. My best to everyone, and hope to see you all in the new year, thank you for your support and friendship, Tom.



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**Tom Burroughs -President Golden Racquets**

**Greetings to the Golden Racquets Community!  
Doug White President Elect**

As we close out 2023 and look ahead to 2024, change and transition are the prevalent themes for Golden Racquets. 2023 saw the addition of pickleball venues, an online venue selection procedure, the acceptance of electronic payments through Zelle, changes to the Golden Racquets constitution, the expansion of our Board of Directors and elections for Board Officers. And most recently, the first in-person annual meeting since before the pandemic, where 27 Golden Racquets members gathered for an update on all those changes (for all the details, please refer to the annual meeting minutes posted on the GR website). During an enjoyable lunch at PJ Skidoos in Fairfax, Golden Racquets President Tom Burroughs served as master of ceremonies as each officer and committee chair provided reports on progress made during the year. In light of his stepping down

as President at the end of the year, he announced that I will be assuming that role as of January 1, 2024.

I am looking forward to leading this organization, which has grown to a thriving community of almost 400 members, and I hope to do so collaboratively with the other Golden Racquets members who volunteer in various capacities that help make Golden Racquets run as smoothly as it does. As deputy information officer I have seen firsthand the efforts made by many to make things work seamlessly. The corps of Golden Racquets volunteers is the heart of this organization, and I am deeply grateful that so many are willing to generously give of their time and talent so we can all play tennis and pickleball with great people at great venues - how cool is that?

One individual that I would like to recognize for their unwavering support and dedication to Golden Racquets is Tom Burroughs. Tom's leadership of this organization over the last five years has been nothing less than extraordinary, especially during the pandemic when the future was uncertain. So, thank you Tom, for getting us through it and helping Golden Rackets emerge stronger and better. I have some big shoes to fill.

2024 is shaping up to be a busy year. We hope to expand our electronic payment capabilities, refine our online venue selection procedures, and extend our pickleball ratings system. We are also looking to adopt ratings standard operating procedures so that we can be sure that all members are playing at levels appropriate for them and for the organization. As President, I welcome feedback from GR members and hope to get to know more of you in the coming year. Good leadership depends on fairness and respect and is how I intend to approach the job. And hopefully, have some fun doing it! Tennis and pickleball are games, after all. With that, I will sign off, wishing each of you a happy and healthy holiday season - see you on the courts!

With Warm Wishes, Doug White

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**Rating GR Members in2024**  
**By Art Politano, Rating Chair, Rating Committee**

The goal of the rating process is to quantify the skill level of players and for them to enjoy competitive and/or social play. Section 13, Article IV of the GR Constitution and ByLaws covers the Rating Committee, the instrument for accomplishing this goal. Current Golden Racquets (GR) members are periodically reviewed and rated, as are new members. A brief overview of the rating process as it will be applied in the 2024 Calendar Year follows.

**Scheduled Rating Review for Current Members:**

In January 2024, all current members who were last rated in Calendar Year (CY) 2021 are due for an assessment. In January, the names of all these select current members will be

forwarded to the Rating Committee members and Captains to recommend a disposition of their ratings. There are about 85 of 381 current members needing a review, including players at all levels from 3.5 to 4.2. (four 3.5s, ten 3.6s, fourteen 3.7s, twenty-five 3.8s, twenty-four 3.9s, six, 4.0s, and two 4.2s.) Typically, recommendations for rating changes are based on a pattern of performance level over six months or so, rather than any one or two day short term performance.

Details along tennis skill areas are requested, so it is a detailed assessment of skill, not a simple judgement call. After the recommendations are made, there is a vote on the reasonableness of the recommendations. If there is a plurality of two votes for or against the change, then that recommendation carries. Usually, the great majority of players stay at their level. It is important to point out that even if a select player is assessed a down rating that player can appeal, and can request and get an actual physical review of their performance.

So, if you were last rated in CY 2021, this is the time to speak to your venue captain or Rating Committee Member about your performance so that communication lines are open. In the Spring of 2024, Golden Racquets opens the organization to new members.

### **Rating Reviews of New Members:**

Obviously, new members would have to be rated so that they can play at a commensurate level of their skill. To make an assessment of a new player's skill level a two step process is used. The first step is to have each player self-assess their skill level. This is done using a worksheet covering ten tennis skill areas derived from the USTA standards, including: serving, use of forehand, backhand, returns, net approach, court mobility net play of volleys, overhead, lob, and communication. There follows an on-court session of play and assessment using Rating Committee members who play at the expected level as the new player. Rating Committee members then assess the player on the same ten skill areas, as exhibited, ranging from poor to excellent. Rating Committee members share their observations of the new player's skill level in discussion among themselves and arrive at a consensus rating level for the player. This resulting rating will then qualify a new player to sign-up for a venue at that rating level or lower. After playing at a particular venue for a couple of months, the new players may find that their performance is better or worse than other players. At this point, the new players may ask to be rerated.

I hope I have given you some sense of how rating in CY 2024 will proceed. If you have questions, contact me at "gr8chair@gmail.com." Rating Committee Members and I are very much committed to be objective, and fair, and compassionate as we do our work. So if you see a Rating Committee Member, say hello, we're all working to make GR competitive and fun (better).

Rating Committee Members include: . Maggie Carney (4.1), Ethylinda Alpuerto (4.0), Ben Asunción (4.0), Pete Porch (4.0), Marlon Enciso (3.9), Dario DeAngeles (3.9), John Santos (3.8), Ed Falkowitz (3.7), Judy Fisher (3.7), and Megan O'Connor (3.7).

Lastly, I'm always looking for new Rating Committee members. If interested, let me know and I'll provide all the training you need.

Your friendly ratings Chair, Art.

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### **Substituting By Fred King, League Captain**

We all joined Golden Racquets because of our love of playing tennis. However, it is very unlikely that everyone will be able to play every day of their scheduled playing time. Injuries, vacations, family events, and other activities mean that we sometimes must find a substitute to play for us. For other members, playing full-time is not possible because of travel or other commitments. However, when these players find a venue at a time and place at which they would like to play from time to time, they can sign up to be substitutes. Before the season begins, we have a sign up. during which those who wish to be regular players can so indicate, and those who wish to be substitutes at a venue can so indicate. It should be noted that when signing up the venues will give not only the dates and time of play, but there is also an indication of the sub fee, i.e. the amount that a substitute should pay to the regular player whom they are replacing.

When a regular player knows that he cannot play, it is their responsibility to find a sub. Their first place to look is the sub list that they receive at the beginning of the season. Only if they cannot find anyone from this list, should they look for other Golden Racquets members eligible to play at the venue. Only if they continue to have difficulty finding a sub, should they ask their captain for assistance. Once a sub is found, a player should notify their captain right away. It is the sub's responsibility to pay the sub fee to the player they are replacing.

I see this as a symbiotic relationship where both the regular player and the substitute benefit. Occasionally there are people who hope to sub without paying the sub fee. To me this is more of a parasitic relationship where the sub gets an opportunity to play and yet doesn't pay what they should for this opportunity. This is like trying to sneak into a show for free without paying the admission fee. Of course sometimes emergencies crop up with short notice and then it is appropriate for the sub to play without having to pay a fee. This is especially the case when the regular player cannot find a last-minute sub, and it falls on the captain to do so.

I notice that some players never ask subs to pay a fee. While this may make them feel like they are "nice guys", it actually can make it harder for those who ask for an appropriate fee to find a substitute. I also notice that some subs go out of their way to pay a fee, even if the regular player has not asked for it or has even said it is not necessary. I think it is appropriate and admirable that they do so. I would welcome any comments or questions on this topic. You can contact me at [Fredmking@gmail.com](mailto:Fredmking@gmail.com)

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**Notes From the Treasurer**  
**By Al McFarland**

The current Golden Racquets bank balance is about \$6,000, which is our targeted balance. All court fee payments to the indoor clubs have been made and all balls purchased for the winter season. Expenses for the additional pickleball venue starting in January, and the New Year's Day party will be covered by the member fees for those events.

As you know, we established a Zelle account with our bank and, for the first time this fall, allowed members to pay their signup fees via Zelle. 39 members successfully paid using Zelle. There were 7 individual payments of over \$1,000. Members used the Zelle capability from 11 different banks. From the treasurer's point of view, this was a successful new method of receiving payments. However, there were perhaps 8 to 10 members who told me they tried to pay with Zelle, but in the end, were unable to do so. We will continue to offer the option to pay with Zelle for all future payments. The Zelle payment is shown on our bank statement, with only the first and last name of the person making the payment.

If you are paying from the account of a person with a last name different from the name of the member, please let us know in advance. Because there may be quite a few different bank apps, all potentially with different procedures and limits, I cannot help members diagnose their problems. But I would ask that any who have difficulty let me know about which bank they are using, the experience they have, and any steps that solved the problem. I would like to include any tips that might be helpful in the Zelle instructions for future signups. I have included here a copy of the letter sent to the Fairfax County Park Foundation with the check for the member donations from 2023. For the last few years, we have included some words encouraging the Fairfax County Park Authority to consider providing indoor tennis and pickleball facilities. You may be interested in the historical increase in indoor court fees noted in this letter, especially since we are apparently not going to have indoor courts with the Arlington YMCA after 2024.

Letter:  
Golden Racquets Tennis and Pickleball Club  
November 26, 2023

Fairfax County Park Foundation  
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 404  
Fairfax, VA 22035-5508

Golden Racquets Tennis and Pickleball Club is a club for persons over 50 in the Fairfax County area. As 92% of our members are 65 years or older, we clearly represent active seniors of our community. We have 358 members who play doubles tennis and pickleball at both indoor and

outdoor venues, including at several Fairfax County Parks. Throughout the year, members make voluntary contributions to our treasury that are designated for the Fairfax County Parks.

Included in this letter is a check to the Fairfax County Park Foundation for \$1,270.00 in appreciation for the opportunity to play at the county parks, and to support the continuation of tennis and pickleball activities. Some of our members, who play at the county parks during the summer, now find the cost excessive to play indoors at private clubs during the winter. In 2015 we paid \$22 per hour at two clubs, and \$24 per hour at a third, for winter season court time. Since then, one of the clubs has closed and the costs at the two remaining clubs were \$36 and \$45 per hour in 2023. The large increases reflect the increased demand from population growth, and the reduction in available indoor courts. Our club would like to encourage the Park Authority to provide indoor tennis and pickleball facilities at county parks. We would be happy to explain how our club operates and how we could contribute to the high utilization of such facilities.

Alvin L. McFarland, Treasurer  
Fairfax County Golden Racquets  
P. O. Box 93, Clifton, VA 20124

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### **Upcoming Social Activities**

#### **New Years Day:**

#### **Golden Racquets New Year's Day Tennis Party**

Event Date: January 1st, 2024

Event Address: Fairfax Racquet Club

Fee: \$10/person

Contact: [JoanneHensley01@gmail.com](mailto:JoanneHensley01@gmail.com)

#### **Food, Friends, Fun and of course, Tennis!**

GR is hosting a New Year's Day Tennis Party from 1:30 - 5:30 pm, broken up into 3 playing blocks. We hope you can join us! You may bring one guest. It'll be a fun way to introduce family and friends to GR. RSVP no later than: **December 5, 2023.**

We have emailed time slots confirmation and will assign courts upon arrival.

If you have missed the sign-up deadline contact Joanne to see if it is still possible to play, assist or just attend to socialize.

## **Pickle Ball Party at Burke Lake Racquet Club:**

Golden Racquets is hosting a pickleball/ potluck party on Jan 13, 2024 from 6:30-9:30 at Burke Racquet and Swim Club. We would like you to come and bring up to three of your pickleball friends and of course, your any non-player friends.

This is a special event and a first for Golden Racquets. We have all five courts, thus there will be 10 pickleball courts set up for this event. The costs are to cover the rental of the courts and the lobby area for our potluck dinner and social

Helen White, Burke's director of Pickleball will be assisting with this event and will provide the lessons.

Cost to play, is \$20 per player and includes potluck dinner. Players can take a lesson with Helen White for an additional \$10. If you are not signing up to play, you can participate in the potluck dinner/social for a small \$5 payment.

Payment is due by Jan 6, 2024 either by

Zelle to [Goldracqclub@gmail.com](mailto:Goldracqclub@gmail.com) or  
check to Golden Racquet  
c/o Joanne Hensley  
7765 Asterella Ct  
Springfield, VA 22152

We hope you are excited about this event.

Your party coordinators,  
Karla Vernon and Joanne Hensley  
Contact: [JoanneHensley01@gmail.com](mailto:JoanneHensley01@gmail.com)

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## **Upcoming Membership**

Following the format of last year-- the 2024 dates for open enrollment:

PB only: Jan 17-31

Tennis (with option to play pickle ball): Feb 15-29

Prospective members will apply directly on the Golden Racquets website [www.goldenracquets.org](http://www.goldenracquets.org) during those dates. GR members are encouraged to spread this message about open enrollment to their family and friends who play.



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## Photos from Annual Meeting in October and Ideas for new Social Events

We have had suggestions for new social events. Please let us know if you would like to help organize an event or have an interested in participating in a certain type of event.

- A watch party at a sports bar of the Australian Open finals
- Getting a block of tickets to attend the Citi Open in DC in August
- Attending a tennis Camp such as the Van de Meer camp at Sweetbriar in June

Contact Doug White our President Elect if you are interested in assisting to organize a social event or have other ideas. [g.douglas.white@gmail.com](mailto:g.douglas.white@gmail.com)

### Photos

#### Tom Burroughs President



**Board**



