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# Curtain Call: Goodbye RDTTC & hello new opportunities

FRIENDS OF RED DEER TENNIS · JUNE 13, 2025

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Greetings fellow tennis folk! We hope you are surviving the smoky conditions.

## Bylaws meeting update

We have an update for you about the RDTTC Bylaws meeting this past weekend. The long and the short of it is ... it seems we were all uninvited, without notice. We encouraged you to attend and support fellow members, and to listen to the meeting even if you couldn't speak; instead we were all blocked. We were asked to leave and the doors were shut against us (this is not a figure of speech).

We expected it to be more like the Town Hall a few weeks ago, where interested tennis folks were allowed to attend and be engaged in what was going on at the Club; but it was something very different. Despite the Board's emails being addressed to both members and players, it somehow became a "voting members only" meeting. Those of us who thought we had valid memberships were blocked at the door (more below). Those of us who have memberships for our children were also forbidden from entering (yes, this Board banned parents of junior members from sitting in the room to hear decisions being made with their membership fees that will affect their children).

The sign below was posted on the door when we arrived. Board Director, Eugene Swanepoel, was on the deck and two more Board Directors, Jean Anne Nichols and Lorraine Whelan, were at a table inside the door checking memberships.



A few interesting notes about this sign: there is no Section 2.1 in the current Bylaws - the ones governing this meeting of the members. Was this Board trying to rely on the authority of the *proposed* Bylaws? The ones that were to be discussed and voted on at the meeting, and that, even if voted for, still require review and ratification by the Societies Act Registrar before they can be in force? (Confusingly, section 2.1 of the Board's amended Bylaws does not pertain to membership either). How ironic for a meeting about Bylaws to have such a prominent demonstration of this Board's lack of understanding of how their own Bylaws work.

## Blocking of Members

As two of the many people turned away at the door, Ben Lawson and Kristin Fast had checked Jegysoft (the Club's software system) to confirm their active membership in advance of the meeting. Ben's account shows an adult membership expiring in July, 2025, and Kristin's membership shows an expiry date of September, 2025. However, they were both denied access based on their son's junior membership expiring on May 31, 2025.

There was a confusing argument that a September purchase to upgrade them all to a family membership meant that all of their memberships expired on the date of the first person's original individual membership. There was no explanation about why the upgrade to a family membership in September was not then pro-rated to an 8 month membership if the expiry timeline were standard practice. Neither was there an explanation about why these details were not reflected in Jegysoft. There were also no prior indications that any of their memberships had expired (no email notifications, for instance, though we know others who have received such notices). And, more tellingly, Ben has been playing at the courts since May 31st - and also since Sunday - without being charged a court fee ... so clearly the Board's and staff's commitment to his membership being expired only lasted from 2-4pm on Sunday.

While the details of this specific membership question seem purposefully muddy, the overall situation was incredibly clear. **None of us were AT ALL welcome.**

To us, this brings into high relief the fact that this Board has fundamentally changed this club. It is no longer a community club that is rooted in, and driven by, the flourishing of its

membership. Instead, our experience tells us that it is now driven only by, and responsive only to, the wishes of this specific Board.

## Closed Doors

We wanted to take a few minutes to outline for you all the wide variety of ways we have tried to engage with this Board and - metaphorically - also faced closed doors.

Starting in September - right after the 4th hate note was delivered to Rene - we urged this Board to take seriously the crimes being committed on the premises, as well as the high personal cost not only to STS coaches but also for our junior members. Between September and October, our group sent multiple individual letters to the Board expressing our concerns about these threatening notes - and offering to be involved in solutions.

These concerns were quickly drowned out by the pickleball controversy, which would also have had effects on court usage, contract agreements with STS, and lesson time. We responded there as well. We created a survey and spoke with 30+ members, players, and parents to ask how lessons would be impacted if the Board's pickleball proposal went ahead, and how this would affect memberships in the RDTC. We shared our results with the Board hoping to better inform their decision-making.

**We attended Board meetings regularly hoping to hear how the various issues we had raised would be discussed and addressed; they weren't.**

As the fall went on, we supported people who brought forward complaints about Board Director behaviour toward STS coaches, toward other Board Directors, and toward members and players. We have most recently written to the Board with specific concerns with the new Code of Conduct and the amended Bylaws (as shared in our newsletters to all of you). We encouraged the Board to take these concerns seriously, for the good of the Club, and to be transparent in their responsiveness to these concerns. In short - we have repeatedly and respectfully tried to express our concerns and to engage meaningfully with this Board, with the goal of trying to steer the Club in what we perceived to be healthy directions.

**We have never received any meaningful reply from this Board about anything of substance.**

We received no reply at all to our letters in the fall about the threatening notes received by Rene. We were never taken up on our offers to help write a harassment policy for the Club or to create a safer, more inclusive culture at RDTC. While our serious formal complaints about aggressive Board Director behaviour did receive replies, they were fairly vacuous (along the lines of "we can't tell you how this matter was resolved but we have dealt with it to our own satisfaction"). We know others who also raised concerns about Board Director behaviour and were then attacked by the same, or other, Board Directors and further victimized for having spoken up. We know that many of you have written letters of concern and either not heard back or felt dismissed in the reply you received, leading you to feel that your concerns were not heard, acknowledged, or cared about by this Board.

In contrast to our desire to engage with this Board and to affect positive change, we were instead banned from observing Board meetings - as was everyone else. Our letters about the hate crimes on the premises were themselves described as "threatening" when they were simply outlining the risks to the Club of leaving such behaviour unaddressed (talk about shooting the messenger).

We cover this ground simply to say that, while Sunday's meeting made the Board's position crystal clear, it has really been the pattern all along; **this Board seems to have no interest in engaging with its membership if that membership doesn't already approve of its choices.**

There was talk from the Board early in the year of doing a survey of the membership to see what folks might want; that never materialized. Instead, the Board hides itself away from the membership more and more; not only are meetings closed even to members (against democratic and historical Club norms), but meetings are riddled with In Camera sessions, which are typically very rare among non-profit Boards. Having frequent In Camera sessions means that the Board can keep even the minutes hidden from the members!

To circle back to Sunday's meeting, the closed door seemed foreshadowed by the increasing secrecy we have witnessed since the Board's first meeting in October. We feel quite sure that if the Board could have changed the Bylaws without coming back to the membership, they would have done so. The fact that they seemed to be relying on the authority of their proposed new Bylaws in their sign for the door is also telling: they were already acting as though their amended Bylaws were approved and in force, even before the membership could vote on them. Their behaviour all year has declared that what the membership wants is irrelevant and that what the Board decides will prevail, even if they have to physically lock their dissenters out of the conversation.

## Looking Ahead

As we grieve the loss of the RDTC as an inclusive and welcoming gathering space, we know that - as we said after the party on June 1st - the tennis community is alive and thriving...just not there. And, in the words of one child continuing to take lessons with STS at their donated private court: "The people are nice here."

And we want nice! We want a kind, healthy community that cares about its people: all those who play or support kids and adults who play, whether they are members or not. We want a place where people listen to opposing viewpoints and care enough to find the common ground, and who use conversation and meaningful engagement to find a path forward that everyone wants to walk.

**We are committed to realizing this vision.** And we have confidence in all of those who are part of this team. We also think it's important to say that we are not a small group. While this newsletter is driven by the core six listed on the Friends website, we are just the names put out in front. We stand alongside a group of 10+ households dedicated to building whatever comes next. This is a diverse group of people with strong skill sets and a determination to create a community that actually does work with and for each other; a community that cares about helping tennis players meet their goals, that takes their hopes and dreams into account, and that values their input and their wellbeing.

While we don't know quite what form this will take, we expect to solidify a plan in the coming months, and will of course keep you posted as the details fall into place. Additionally, we want to share that we have been out scouting winter facilities, and can confidently say that, while it may be an imperfect solution, we will have a solution for when the snow flies! We look forward to sharing updates with you as we have them.

Until then, let's carry on supporting each other through this transition, continuing to find ways to play tennis and to have fun.

Keep Rallying,

The Friends

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