

# Legal fight closer over proposed sports complex

## Glenrose lawyer questions project classification

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Residents in the Glenrose neighborhood southeast of Spokane moved one step closer to using legal action to stop the development of a large youth sports complex on 20 acres of agricultural land.

In a July 9 letter to John Pederson, Spokane County's planning

director, the Glenrose Association asked the county to explain why it classifies the project as a "community recreation facility" instead of a "participant sports and recreation" facility, which the neighborhood believes is a more correct definition.

In the letter, local lawyer Rick Eichstaedt, who works for the Seattle-based environmental law

firm Bricklin & Newman and represents the association, said the second classification better fits the project, due both to its size and character.

By defining the project incorrectly, Eichstaedt asserts the project has progressed erroneously and, potentially, unlawfully.

The Spokane Youth Sports Association has plans to build the \$2.2 million complex, which it calls the Zakheim Youth Sports Complex, on the southeast corner

of 37th Avenue and Glenrose Road.

According to a grant application filed by SYSA with the state Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, the sports complex will "build one multipurpose sports field, a parking lot, storage facilities, and restrooms. When fully developed, the sports complex will include four youth baseball fields, two multisport fields with lights, a basketball court, storage facilities,

See **GLENROSE, 9**

Sunday July 21, 2

## GLENROSE

Continued from 1

restrooms, and a walking path. The multiuse field could be used year-round and will be the only synthetic turf field on the South Hill."

The complex would draw teams "from the entire Spokane area," according to the grant application, including "the Northside, Mead, Deer Park, Spokane Valley and Airway Heights." The complex would host two large tournaments a year, "necessitating at least 350 hotel rooms."

Considering the breadth and nature of activities in the complex, Eichstaedt argued in the letter that it doesn't meet the definition of "community recreation facility," which does not include the word "sport" in its description. Instead, the term applies to a place that "provides amusement, relaxation, or diversion from normal activities for persons within the area in which it is located and which is not operated for profit."

The definition of a "participant sports and recreation" facility, however, does include the word "sport." It is defined as a place where "sport or recreation is conducted outside of an enclosed structure. Examples include tennis courts, water slides, and driving ranges."

Eichstaedt also focused on the section of "community recreation facility" definition that described serving "persons within the area in which it is located." He noted that

the Spokane County Parks Department defines "community parks" as serving people who live within 3 miles.

"SYSA intends for its sports field to be a regional sports hub that draws people from well beyond the Glenrose neighborhood," Eichstaedt's letter states. "SYSA plans multiday tournaments drawing teams from areas far beyond the immediate community, and far beyond a one to three-mile service area."

Finally, Eichstaedt said he could find no previous development that had been defined the way the county is defining SYSA's project.

"The County's records reveal that other projects classified as a 'community recreation facility' have never included any sports field complexes or similar facilities," it said. "To the contrary, the term has been applied to facilities serving a small service area, typically an individual development."

Pederson could not be reached for comment. Calls to SYSA were not returned.

Eichstaedt's letter follows one written in May by the neighborhood association to SYSA, which cited numerous permitting and legal hurdles for the project and urged the SYSA to "address the serious concerns of the neighborhood."

"You can avoid the expense, delay and uncertainty of permit and legal battles and retain control of the outcomes," the May letter said. "You have little to lose and much to gain by seeking a mutually acceptable solution with your would-be neighbors."