

Church gets ballfield next to Cameron Estates

By Noel Stack | City editor | December 12, 2007 16:46

A Cameron Park church may build a ballfield, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors decided Tuesday after hearing hours of testimony.

Light of the Hills Lutheran Church on Rodeo Road requested a special use permit amendment that would allow the construction of a youth softball/soccer field on property next to the church and a two-story Sunday school building behind the church. The ballfield, fenced and maintained by the church, will be open to the public for scheduled games at no charge.

'We want to do something now before it's too late to make our community a better place,' said Pastor Alan Sommer.

But many residents in the neighboring Cameron Estates opposed the project, telling the supervisors the noise and traffic from a ballfield next door would ruin the rural character of the neighborhood.

'I'm not against children,' said resident Nancy Lee Getman. 'I'm against the commercial use of that ballfield.'

Cameron Estates resident Tom Yancey, whose property is next to the 5-acre property where the field will be built, said the noise and activity could spook his horses and encourage more trespassers on his land.

'This public ballfield will make it unsafe for my family to use the property as it was intended,' Yancey said.

While cognizant that the public ballfield would add some activity, church member Brian Morris said it doesn't compare to the commercial operations in the area. The church is across the street from Burke Junction and Food 4 Less. The noise generated from a ballfield is a 'drop in the bucket' compared to the noise of the freeway, he said.

Cameron Estates resident Steve Jones disagreed, saying, 'I do believe I will hear (noise from games) as if it was in my own driveway.'

Looking at the project in a different light, Cameron Estates resident Kim Beal said she supports the ballfield project because it will serve as a buffer between the rural residential area and the commercial area. If the church sells the property, Beal said, it could be rezoned for a higher intensity use.

Supervisor Rusty Dupray, who made the motion to approve the project with specific conditions, agreed.

'I just think this is a great transition, a great buffer,' Dupray said.

Noting the shortage in ballfields and the shortage of cash in the county's General Fund, Dupray also applauded the church's project, saying, 'I'm glad that someone has stepped up to the plate and will build us a ballfield.'

'I see a church trying to do some outreach,' said Supervisor Ron Briggs, who seconded the motion.

Supervisors Dupray, Briggs, Helen Baumann, Jack Sweeney and Norma Santiago approved the

amended special use permit.

Light of the Hills Lutheran Church's original special use permit would have allowed the church to build two additional buildings on the church property totaling 18,000 square feet. The amendment deletes those projects and allows only the ballfield on the neighboring property owned by the church and one 13,720-square-foot building on the church property.

The supervisors also OK'd a zone change for the church parcel from limited multi-family residential to 5-acre residential in conformance with the General Plan. The property where the ballfield will be built is 5-acre residential.

Conditions to the ballfield project include:

¥ Hours of operation limited to daylight hours only; no lights. On Saturdays games may start no earlier than 9 a.m., on Sundays no earlier than noon.

¥ Youth leagues and intra-church leagues may use the field; no other adult organized leagues.

¥ Parking allowed only in the church parking lot, not on the streets.

¥ The ballfield will be enclosed by a 6-foot high chain link fence. The church also plans to fence the entire property with a more residential looking fence to blend in with the neighborhood.

If the church deviates from the conditions, Baumann noted, the neighbors can come back to the board with a request to revoke the special use permit.

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