

Reflecting the latest research findings, this executive summary synthesizes a comprehensive investigation into municipal oversight failures and financial mismanagement within youth sports. Originally focused on the economic impact of sports facility investments, the study has evolved to uncover systemic issues—from unsustainable cash payment practices for umpires to significant financial discrepancies in USSSA tournament fees. Detailed analyses of case studies in Moore, Choctaw, and Shawnee expose deficiencies in municipal oversight, including noncompetitive lease agreements and undervalued public asset transactions. These findings underscore the urgent need for enhanced transparency, rigorous accountability measures, and legal reforms to secure public investments and ensure the sustainability of community-based youth sports programs.

This morning, I am reflecting on the evolution of my research and the insights gained from my study. Initially, my focus was on the economic impact of youth sports, particularly how municipal investments in sports facilities contribute to local economies. My goal was to analyze the relationship between municipal investment and return, particularly within the framework of youth sports organizations.

As my study progressed, I turned my attention to the cash payment system used for umpires, which significantly impacts the competitive landscape. Organizations such as the YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, and municipal parks and recreation programs struggle to compete with the prevailing business culture of cash-based umpire payments. While umpires typically receive \$40 to \$65 per game in cash, YMCA officials are compensated at hourly rates between \$13 and \$15. This creates an unsustainable business model, limiting access to quality officials and restricting the development of a sustainable officiating workforce.

Expansion into Competitive Showcase Structures

My research then expanded to explore the detrimental effects of competitive showcase baseball and softball on local youth programs. The dominance of showcase events has stifled opportunities for community-based teams, diverting resources away from municipal youth leagues. This shift led me to investigate how municipalities handle oversight and transparency in youth sports agreements.

A case study at the City of Moore provided a compelling example. Moore city officials contacted me to discuss their concerns regarding their youth baseball provider, Moore Youth Baseball Association (MYBA). The city sought just cause to terminate MYBA's contract and initiated a Request for Proposal (RFP) process, ultimately renewing the lease agreement. However, my research uncovered financial

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discrepancies, including \$770,000 in unreported United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) tournament entry fees processed through the complex. These financial activities were omitted from Moore's annual financial reports, revealing a transparency gap between user groups and municipal oversight bodies.

Further investigation into Moore's oversight mechanisms revealed that MYBA had failed to pay its 2022 and 2023 lease obligations. This lack of accountability illustrates the fundamental issue of inadequate municipal oversight and governance. Through my research, I manually audited the Buck Thomas Complex from 2016 to 2024 and found that USSSA tournament entry fees totaled \$1.3 million. These funds were collected by tournament directors operating within 501(c)(3) boards but extracting themselves from organizational governance to function as middlemen. Municipalities remained largely unaware of these financial structures within their facilities.

Similarly, an audit of the City of Choctaw from 2016 to 2024 revealed that \$2.1 million in USSSA tournament entry fees had been processed through its facilities without being reinvested in complex operations. These findings highlight two tiers of USSSA tournament directors: (1) established business professionals at the top and (2) local tournament directors leveraging control over leased municipal facilities. This structure effectively creates a monopoly over public sports complexes, diverting financial resources away from youth programs.

Municipal Oversight Failures in Shawnee

Expanding my research to Shawnee, I examined the historic Lions Club Ball Fields, a landmark facility impacted by a 2022 tornado. For over a year, the facility remained open to the public, posing a safety risk. Despite raising concerns at multiple Parks and Recreation and Beautification Board meetings, submitting emails to city council members, and attempting to meet with city management, I received no substantive response. My interactions included a discussion with the Assistant City Manager, who resigned shortly afterward.

Lions Club Ball Fields sit on land transferred to the City of Shawnee by the U.S. government under an Instrument of Transfer (IOT). This executive order stipulates strict usage regulations, including fair market value assessments for lease agreements. However, my investigation revealed that the City of Shawnee had previously sold 9.2 acres of this IOT land to Oklahoma Baptist University for \$200,000—far below its assessed market value. Additionally, the city sold the Little Theatre for \$12,000, also well below market rate. These transactions eliminated long-term lease revenue streams that would have provided sustainable income for municipal operations.

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My analysis of lease agreements uncovered further issues, such as the Continental Barbershop lease, which increased from \$80 to either \$300 or \$500 monthly to offset city-incurred maintenance costs. The city is effectively subsidizing these businesses through taxpayer funds. Additionally, lease agreements in Shawnee appear to rotate among select individuals without public bidding, raising potential conflicts of interest. City council members, responsible for governing fair market valuations, have historically held or benefited from these leases.

From 1998 to 2007, my research of city minutes indicates Shawnee approved a regional park funded by a sales tax initiative. Records confirm expenditures on renderings and site selections. However, despite these approvals, the regional park was never completed. Discussions ceased around 2011, and as recently as 2007, a former commissioner publicly reminded the council of its obligation to follow through with the project. My discussions with a current city council member confirm that progress halted with no clear explanation.

Financial Discrepancies and Mismanagement

Another concerning finding is the approval of capital funding projects with inflated financing rates. In one instance, the city approved financing at 4.25% interest, despite prevailing market rates ranging between 3.25% and 3.5%. Moreover, financing agreements were conducted through non-competitive processes, raising questions about potential financial mismanagement and increased taxpayer burden. This misalignment contrasts with a prior city initiative in the mid-2000s, where the city manager successfully consolidated high-interest loans, saving taxpayers between \$1.3 million and \$3.3 million. The lack of transparency surrounding these financial maneuvers suggests potential avenues for municipal accountability reform.

Challenges in Governance and Transparency

Shawnee's governance structure presents significant obstacles to reform. A recent municipal election introduced four new council members and a mayor, yet they remain entangled in the same lease agreements contributing to systemic issues. Meanwhile, youth sports opportunities within Shawnee continue to decline as programs are pushed beyond city limits to accommodate a select group of beneficiaries.

The upcoming county-wide education tax raises additional concerns. Historical documentation reveals USSSA events hosted on county school facilities, raising questions about whether public funds are subsidizing private tournament operations. Similarly, local basketball leagues utilizing school gyms for competitive events may be leveraging taxpayer-funded resources without proper oversight.

Connecting to National Legal Precedents

The ongoing USSSA lawsuit in Florida, led by two whistleblowers, provides national context for these local concerns. While the lawsuit exposes governance failures at the federal level, the impact on Oklahoma youth sports is profound. The state mirrors the same business culture of financial opacity, unchecked tournament monopolies, and municipal complicity. Addressing these challenges requires a shift in governance, accountability, and financial transparency within local sports management.

Municipal Leadership and Policy Failures

Municipal ignorance plays a key role in perpetuating these issues. Many Parks and Recreation directors transition into senior municipal positions, reinforcing outdated governance models. In some instances, individuals with limited financial or administrative experience, such as retired fire department personnel, ascend to city management roles. This perpetuates a cycle of municipal mismanagement, where longstanding financial structures remain unchallenged.

Final Thoughts and Next Steps

My research into Shawnee's Instrument of Transfer land suggests potential legal repercussions. The airport authority could pursue litigation to recover lost revenue due to undervalued land leases. Additionally, decisions made by previous city administrations have eliminated long-term revenue streams, contributing to ongoing financial instability.

Building a comprehensive legal framework through city minutes and lease agreement analysis may provide a mechanism for municipal accountability. However, my immediate priority remains completing the USSSA financial study. My findings so far indicate that between 2016 and 2017, significant funds flowed through municipal sports complexes without proper oversight. Whether municipalities were unaware or complicit in these operations, the red flags raised warrant further investigation.

For now, I will continue to research financial transactions within USSSA tournament structures and municipal agreements. Transparency, oversight, and accountability remain critical themes in my study, and I will persist in uncovering the financial realities impacting youth sports governance.

Journal Entry: March 20, 2025 | Research Reflections and Progress

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Journal Entry	Professor K (Summary)	Minutes Research	Key Themes	Action Items	Related Entities	Follow-up Required	Supporting Data Sources
<p>This morning's reflection marks a turning point in my research on municipal involvement in youth sports. Initially focused on the economic impact of sports facility investments, my study evolved to expose significant issues in the cash payment systems for umpires and the consequent competitive disparities. Detailed case studies from Moore, Choctaw, and Shawnee reveal systemic financial discrepancies—most notably, unreported USSSA tournament entry fees and missed lease obligations—highlighting deficient municipal oversight and transparency.</p>	<p>Highlights the emergence of financial mismanagement and governance lapses in municipal youth sports, emphasizing the detrimental impact of unsustainable payment systems and opaque lease practices.</p>	<p>Analysis of city minutes reveals neglected projects (e.g., an uncompleted regional park in Shawnee) and evidence of oversight failures, including inconsistent lease renewals and missing financial disclosures.</p>	<p>Municipal oversight and transparency; Financial discrepancies and mismanagement; Impact of cash payment systems on youth sports; Conflicts of interest in lease agreements and undervalued public asset transactions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the USSSA financial study with detailed audits. • Follow up with city officials in Moore, Choctaw, and Shawnee regarding oversight and lease irregularities. • Develop recommendations for legal and procedural reforms. • Investigate alternative remuneration models for umpires. 	<p>YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, municipal parks and recreation programs; Moore Youth Baseball Association (MYBA); USSSA and associated tournament directors; City of Moore, City of Choctaw, City of Shawnee; U.S. government Instrument of Transfer land, Oklahoma Baptist University, Little Theatre; Continental Barbershop; Lions Club Ball Fields.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further investigation into USSSA financial transactions and municipal oversight. • Schedule meetings with relevant municipal officials. • Reassess long-term revenue impacts of undervalued municipal land deals and explore legal avenues for recovery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City minutes and lease agreements from Moore, Choctaw, and Shawnee. • Manual audit records of the Buck Thomas Complex (2016-2024). • Annual financial reports and internal communications. • Documentation of USSSA tournament fees. • Correspondence with municipal oversight bodies and case study details.

Disclaimer: This summary is presented in a formal, academic style, reflecting both legal and community perspectives. The findings herein are based on the data compiled in the Research and do not constitute legal advice. The opinions expressed regarding municipal failures are those of the investigator(s) and do not necessarily represent an official stance by any governing body.