

# Integrity of the Game vs. Economic Impact (Oklahoma Case Studies)

## Chapter X: Legal Oversight, Fiduciary Duty, and the Erosion of Public Accountability in Youth Sports Facilities

### Introduction

Across Oklahoma, municipalities and tribal entities manage youth sports facilities under varying ownership models—municipal land, federally granted land, nonprofit ownership, sovereign tribal jurisdiction, and state-affiliated education foundations. While the public relies on these facilities for youth development, recreation, and community identity, each model presents unique legal obligations and risks of financial opacity. This chapter analyzes the governance and fiduciary complexities through seven case studies: Brian Crawford Memorial Sports Complex, Lions Club Ballfields, Firelake Ballfields, State School Land, Chickasha Sports Complex, Seminole Softball Quad, and Bentley Park Sports Complex.

In addition to Oklahoma-specific examples, this chapter acknowledges the recent whistleblower lawsuit filed in the State of Florida against USSSA and its leadership. The lawsuit alleged widespread financial misconduct, lack of institutional controls, and systemic abuse of organizational assets. Though initially seen as a beacon for broader reform, the case was quietly settled out of court—a resolution that many, including this author, view as a missed opportunity for national transparency. The closure of this legal window intensifies the importance of this dissertation's mission: to expose and reform an accountability-starved youth sports ecosystem in Oklahoma.

### Case Study I: Brian Crawford Memorial Sports Complex

Owned by the Seminole State College Educational Foundation (SSCEF), a 501(c)(3) fundraising entity affiliated with Seminole State College, this facility was supported through multiple significant state-level investments, including substantial grants from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. While not subject to municipal oversight, SSCEF is accountable to state-level oversight mechanisms. The complex serves a public function, but transparency in revenue reporting, user group access, and donor influence remains limited. One of the user groups utilizing the facility is closely associated with

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Owned by the Seminole State College Educational Foundation (SSCEF), a 501(c)(3) fundraising entity affiliated with Seminole State College, this facility benefited from significant state-level financial support, including major grants administered through the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. While not subject to municipal oversight, SSCEF is accountable to state-level oversight mechanisms. The complex serves a public function, but transparency in revenue reporting, user group access, and donor influence remains limited. One of the user groups utilizing the facility is closely associated with local civic leadership, with connections that include municipal roles and oversight of other recreational facilities within the city.

### **Case Study II: Lions Club Ballfields**

Located in Shawnee, OK on Instrument of Transfer land governed by a 1947 Executive Order, the Lions Club Ballfields face legal ambiguity. Tornado damage in 2023 and city-led demolition plans occurred without robust community input. The ShawneeMinutes dataset suggests the city's decision bypassed its original commitment to developing a regional park on this federally influenced land, potentially breaching its fiduciary duties and IOT terms.

### **Case Study III: Firelake Ballfields**

Operated by the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Firelake Ballfields represent the challenges of tribal trust land used for public events. Although sovereign, the facility receives federal funds and operates USSSA events with little external financial disclosure. Sovereign immunity, exemption from state open records laws, and limited public reporting raise concerns over the alignment of economic use and trust responsibilities.

### **Case Study IV: State School Land**

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Many USSSA tournaments take place on facilities owned by public schools, universities, or colleges. These institutions occupy state school land held in trust by the Commissioners of the Land Office. Yet agreements are often informal, made by coaches or athletic directors without school board approval or transparent fee schedules. This practice risks violating constitutional requirements for land use benefiting education and enables private profits from public assets.

#### Case Study V: Chickasha Sports Complex

Following a 2015 leadership change, the Parks and Recreation Director of Chickasha also operated as an independent USSSA tournament director. He is believed to have severed relationships with longstanding user groups, leaving the complex underutilized. This dual-role conflict illustrates unethical conduct and governance failure, particularly as city leadership may have unknowingly enabled this shift without understanding its consequences.

#### Summary Financial Metrics:

- Team Entry Fees: \$2,752 (aggregated)
- Games: 4,128
- Officials: \$165,120.00
- Event Net: \$919,214.82
- Economic Impact: (est. based on total Event Net × 1.75 multiplier) Following a 2015 leadership change, the Parks and Recreation Director of Chickasha also operated as an independent USSSA tournament director. He is believed to have severed relationships with longstanding user groups, leaving the complex underutilized. This dual-role conflict illustrates unethical conduct and governance failure, particularly as city leadership may have unknowingly enabled this shift without understanding its consequences.

#### Case Study VI: Seminole Softball Quad

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The Seminole Softball Quad is a municipally linked facility managed by an individual with close personal ties to local elected leadership, a relationship that may raise concerns under legal principles governing conflicts of interest and perceived favoritism in public contracting. This relationship raises potential concerns regarding conflict of interest and governance overlap, especially given that the couple's affiliated user group also utilizes the Brian Crawford Memorial Sports Complex. These overlapping roles between city governance and user group management exemplify a need for stronger separation of duties and enforceable ethics standards at the local level.

### Case Study VII: Bentley Park Sports Complex

Bentley Park Sports Complex, located in Bixby, OK, spans 114 acres and includes multiple baseball and softball quads, soccer fields, and community recreation amenities. Former Mayor and City Council member Brian Guthrie played a leadership role during its development. From the Hidden Valley dataset, the complex was involved in over 40 events, representing more than 10,000 teams and generating significant regional economic activity. This scale of operations underscores the potential economic impact such facilities offer municipalities, provided ethical and transparent governance is maintained.

### Summary Financial Metrics:

- Team Entry Fees: \$1,768,213.68
- Event Gate: \$851,392.56
- Event Income: \$2,619,606.24
- Games: 14,004
- Officials: \$560,160.00
- Event Net: \$2,456,308.14
- Economic Impact: \$4,298,539.24 Bentley Park Sports Complex, located in Bixby, OK, spans 114 acres and includes multiple baseball and softball quads, soccer fields, and community recreation amenities. Former Mayor and City Council member Brian Guthrie played a leadership role during its development. From the

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## **Chapter Y: A Statewide Reform Framework for Ethical Oversight of Youth Sports Facilities**

### **Introduction**

This framework proposes legislative, administrative, and institutional reforms to address the systemic failures in facility oversight, ethical governance, and financial transparency documented throughout this dissertation. The goal is to establish a uniform standard of fiduciary responsibility, land use compliance, and accountability across all youth sports facilities.

### **1. Unified Facility Oversight Classification System (UFOCS)**

Create a state registry classifying each facility by ownership, public access status, usage agreements, and funding source. This registry enables tracking and eligibility for public funding.

### **2. Mandatory Annual Facility Disclosures**

Require all publicly supported facilities to submit an Annual Facility Disclosure (AFD), including revenue, contracts, user group lists, and maintenance costs.

### **3. Dual Role Prohibition and Ethics Enforcement**

Prohibit public employees from acting as private tournament directors on facilities they manage. Establish an independent oversight office to investigate violations.

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### **4. Lease and Use Agreement Reforms**

Mandate public approval of leases/use agreements at school boards or city councils.  
Require transparent bidding and Certificate of Compliance from all user groups.

### **5. Oversight of Federal and IOT Lands**

Coordinate with federal agencies to enforce IOT terms and support cooperative governance between cities and tribal/federal partners.

### **6. Youth Sports Integrity Task Force (YSITF)**

Appoint a statewide task force to audit current practices, develop model policies, and create sample ordinances for local governments.

### **7. Digital Transparency Portal**

Create a public-facing portal to search facilities, view disclosures, report complaints, and access enforcement outcomes.

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## **Conclusion**

These reforms respond to widespread failures in Oklahoma's youth sports governance. By aligning oversight across jurisdictions and establishing enforceable accountability systems, the state can restore public trust, ensure responsible use of public assets, and uphold the integrity of youth sports operations.