

Doctoral Lecture: Public Safety, Governance, and Liability

A Case Study of Lions Club Ballfields, Shawnee, OK

This lecture explores the public safety failures, legal responsibilities, and governance issues surrounding the Lions Club Ballfields in Shawnee, Oklahoma. Damaged by the April 2023 tornado, the ballfields remained in a hazardous state for 15 months, creating significant risks to the community. The original legal document, Instrument of Transfer No. 10739-47, outlines the City of Shawnee's obligations to maintain the property. Supporting documentation includes photographs showing the public safety risks posed by the site's neglect.

Key Timeline and Events

- April 19, 2023: A tornado causes severe damage to the Lions Club Ballfields.
- April 9, 2024: Shawnee issues a public notice for the ballfields' demolition.
- February-March 2024: Photos reveal significant safety hazards, such as debris, structural instability, and environmental contamination.
- July 2024: City of Shawnee begins the demolition process.

Public Safety Failures and Risks

- Debris and Structural Instability: Unsecured debris, broken fencing, and unstable poles create ongoing hazards. These conditions persisted for over a year.
- Environmental Contamination: Soil contamination due to debris required the removal of the top 6 inches of soil during demolition. This environmental hazard increased the urgency of securing the area to protect public health.
- Proximity to Community Spaces: The ballfields are adjacent to the Shawnee YMCA and an early childhood center, with shared parking lots, increasing exposure to safety risks.

Legal and Governance Analysis

- Document No. 10739-47: This Instrument of Transfer outlines Shawnee's obligations, including maintaining the property for public use and ensuring public safety. It also includes a reversionary clause, allowing the federal government to reclaim the land if Shawnee fails to meet its responsibilities.
- Negligence and Liability: The City Manager holds greater operational responsibility and liability for public safety failures, while the Mayor may have limited personal liability.
- Public Complaints and Awareness: Public safety concerns were raised in Parks and Recreation Board meetings, further demonstrating the city's awareness of the hazards.

Public Safety Concerns - Shawnee Lions Club Ballfields



Public Safety Concerns - Shawnee Lions Club Ballfields



Public Safety Concerns - Shawnee Lions Club Ballfields

