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## Ball field strikes out with neighbors

### El Dorado planners urge use limits for church's proposal.

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A church's outreach effort was declared out of bounds by neighboring homeowners, leading the El Dorado County Planning Commission to recommend restricting use of a proposed ball field.

Light of the Hills Lutheran Church wants to revise a special use permit for its property at Rodeo Road and Coach Lane south of Highway 50 in Cameron Park, and to extend the permit to an adjoining 5-acre parcel where it proposes to develop a multipurpose ball field.

But residents of the neighboring Cameron Estates packed the commission hearing room Oct. 25 to protest the church's plan to make the ball field available to community sports leagues. Tom Yancey, whose 25 acres surround much of the church property, said he feared "the result will be to turn that parcel into a veritable sports complex."

Church member and spokesman Mark Jerpbak noted that proposed conditions of approval for the project prohibited lights and sound systems on the field and limited use to the daytime.

The proposed ball field would be used for church-sponsored activities, such as carnivals and picnics now held in the parking lot, and for sports events, Jerpbak said.

Citing the shortage of playing fields available for use by community sports leagues in the Cameron Park area, Jerpbak said the church didn't want to limit use to just its members. But he said the field would be fenced and scheduling would be handled through the church office.

Several Cameron Estates residents said they didn't object to the church's building plans or to a ball field for church functions. But they complained that opening the field to community leagues would result in increased traffic congestion and noise.

Angela Johnson said she found it difficult to speak against the project because "the church has been such a good neighbor to us. They let us use their building, and they do a lot of good for the community."

But Johnson said the ball field would draw additional traffic to an already congested area near a commercial center that includes a grocery store and restaurants.

Nancy Lee Getman, who lives south of the church, said the ball field would lower property values in the area, adding that she would not have purchased a home next to a sports field.

"If a ball field would have turned us away," she said, "it will turn others away as well."

Planning Commission members said they believed Cameron Estates residents had valid concerns about use of the field by community sports leagues.

Given the demand for playing fields, commission member Dave Machado said one might expect the church field to be used daily for practice and all day Saturdays for games.

But commission members also pointed out that the 5-acre parcel is zoned for multifamily residential use. If the church were to abandon the ball field project, they noted, up to 40 residences could be built on the site.

The commission recommended restricting the field to church activities, prohibiting its use by nonchurch sports leagues for either practice or games, and limiting use to between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Planning staff members said they would prepare amended conditions for commission approval Nov. 8.

The commission will forward its recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, which is scheduled to consider the matter at 2 p.m. Dec. 11.

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