

LETTER IN OPPOSITION
December 2, 2015

Eastlake City Council is considering a lease in which the American-Croatian Lodge (ACL) will pay the City only \$1 per year in exchange for about seven acres of city-owned land for 20 years. In return, the ACL will build themselves five or six new soccer fields that they can use to generate profit by hosting travel tournaments and soccer clinics.

Eastlake residents are not welcome to use the fields unless they (a) pay for their kids to play soccer with the ACL teams or (b) pay the fees associated with renting the soccer field. If the new fields will not be open to the public then the City should sell the property to the ACL, who demonstrated an interest in buying the property, rather than lease the land for pennies.

The City is handing the ACL two parcels of land valued at \$220,000, tax-free, for \$1 per year. The ACL can turn around and make tens of thousands or more by using the property for tournaments, soccer clinics, and other private events. At the same time, the City is handcuffing itself to this arrangement for 20 years. The City cannot end the agreement or use the land for any other purpose until 2035. I have no doubt that the ACL has pure intentions in building the fields.

The fields could be a real improvement for the community if the ACL lets the public use the fields or if they pay for the land. If the City sells the land, it could spend those funds on a proper park for all Eastlake residents to enjoy.

“Residents will say ‘our tax dollars paid for the land, we don’t want you to sell it,’” said Mayor Morley at a Dec. 1 Finance Committee meeting when he was asked why the City is leasing instead of selling the land. He also said that the area is “blighted” and that the City does not use the land because it cannot afford to use the land. Morley said he believes the fields could improve the City because people can drive by and see the nice, new, privately owned and operated fields.

Councilmembers and the Mayor raised concerns regarding parking, but they failed to ask questions regarding the extremely long lease, the City’s inability to terminate the lease, the fact that the fields will not be open to the public, or the lack of fairness in allowing the land to be leased to the ACL without first inviting bids from other organizations who may want to use the land.

Adding more soccer fields behind the ACL might be good for the community. It might be a good way to use the land. But it’s not a good way to use City property. The City is letting a private corporation lease the land for \$1 for 20 years, and in exchange will receive only the 20-year-old soccer fields when the lease is up. The City should not hinder public access to public land by leasing it for \$1 to a private corporation to use, tax free, for private events to generate a private profit. Our City cannot afford another bad deal.

Please reach out to your Councilmember to voice your concerns regarding the pending Lease agreement.

Sincerely,
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