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MAYOR AND COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Susie Byrd, City Representative, District #2
DATE: December 19, 2008
RE: Agenda Item Back Up

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Dear Mayor and Council:

On next week's agenda, I have posted the following item:

Discussion and action on allowing girls under the age of 12 to play on boys' teams in city leagues.

On Monday, my son and I ran into his basketball coach at mini dribbler's practice. My son wanted to know if they would have a team this year. The coach explained that they didn't have enough boys to make the team. I asked about the girls that played on the team last year. Weren't they going to play? "No," Coach Joey said, "the City won't let the girls play on the boys' teams anymore. They said it is a liability to let the girls play with the boys because the boys might hurt the girls."

Last year, my son John played on an under 10 basketball team at the Marty Robbins Center on the east side. They were undefeated. Two girls played on the team. The leading scorer was a girl. The other team that Coach Joey coached was under 8. They had a couple girls on the team. They were also undefeated. One of their best players was a girl. John's coach, who likes to win, is obviously very upset about losing some of his best players to a rule that doesn't make sense to him.

Studies show that there is little physiological difference girls and boys before the onset of puberty. Since more and more girls are encouraged to play sports from an early age, they have the ability and the skills to compete with boys. So, why won't we let them?

I asked our Parks and Recreation Department for an answer. Here is what I got back: "We do not currently offer co-ed youth sports leagues for programs managed by our Sports Section; we offer boys divisions and girls divisions. Girl players who are exceptional usually play up in age group. There are instances when girl age groups do not have enough players to make enough teams. When this happens, we do allow girls to play on boys teams, but staff also explains that if the girls division does make they would have to move to a girls team. Staff is guided by UIL and NCAA rules which are guided by Title IX. Paula states that she has been offering the program this way for 10 years with much success and has doubled the girls' programs."

I'm glad to hear that we are increasing participation in our girls' programs, but this still doesn't answer my question. If a girl under the age of 12 wants to compete and can compete on a boys' team, why can't she? The answer "because she is a girl" didn't seem fair to me.

I would like City Council to consider allowing girls under the age of 12 to play on boys teams in city leagues as the rule, rather than as the exception.

I sent out a blog ([www.notesfromdistrict2.blogspot.com](http://www.notesfromdistrict2.blogspot.com)) on this item and received a lot of comment back. On a poll on the blog, 30 people voted and 29 agreed that girls should be allowed to compete on boy's teams. I received 23 email responses on the issue, several of them from volunteer coaches. Of the 29 email responses, only two said they disagreed with allowing girls on boys teams.

Sincerely,



Susie Byrd

City Council Representative, District 2