

# Swoosh or air ball? Future of Calhoun basketball court up for debate

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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**HARDIN** - A basketball court located near the new Calhoun County Courthouse is one of the only outdoor activities for kids in the rural town to enjoy, but it may cause a hazard to future development, said members of the Calhoun County Board.

Board member Larry Wieneke, who described himself as in favor of the court remaining, said he wants to support it staying near the former grade school, which is in the process of becoming the new county courthouse. He was concerned, however, about

liabilities possibly incurred by the court's position, which may be near a potential parking area once development is finished. Wieneke said a couple of board members spoke against the court, because of potential parking hazards.

"We don't have a lot of facilities here for the kids," Wieneke said. "It has been used by a lot of the kids. We don't have a lot of green space for kids to play either. To close it would be awful for the kids."

Wieneke said the area now supporting the basketball court was left vacant for several years after the former grade school shut its doors. He said any potential liabilities or lawsuits from the court's placement would ultimately be akin to shooting oneself in the foot.

"If someone gets hurt there, and they sue, it will basically be like suing themselves, because it's a county courthouse sponsored by their tax dollars," he said.

The court was established around five years ago by Nate Sagez, owner of The Crunch fitness facility, Wieneke said.

Ultimately, he favors a list of rules and regulations for the court's usage to assuage his fellow board members' fear of liability, but would like to see it stay in the location to give children in the county something to do with their free time to get exercise and play time.

Another board member, Phil Robeen, spoke in favor of the court staying. He said he has been tasked by the board to draft an acceptable use policy for the next meeting of the Calhoun County Board, which will take place at 3:30 p.m. on June 19. The future of the court will be discussed at that meeting.

"A decision has not been made concerning the future of the court," he said. "I was asked at the last meeting to draft an acceptable use policy for the next meeting. There are five people on the board, and I am not clear on how the rest of the board stands. There is clearly one against, and the other three are up in the air."

Robeen did not comment regarding who was against. If both Wieneke and Robeen stay in favor of the court, two of the five members would vote in favor of the court.

When asked why he supported the court, Robeen echoed Wieneke's sentiments.

"There are limited things for the children in the area to do," he said. "Why in the world would you want to take that away from them? There is not another accessible hoop for the kids in town."

The dispute regarding the court is due to parking, Robeen said. While the layout is still under development, Robeen said parking is looking limited, though it has yet to be configured. Some members of the board may support making the court into a parking lot, but added it is not on the handicapped accessible side of the building, so he said it may not make the most sense to do so.

A petition on [www.change.org](http://www.change.org) was created by Kimberly Eilerman of Batchtown, and has been signed by 278 supporters as of 12:52 p.m. Thursday, June 8, 2017. It has been accompanied by a social media hashtag, #savethepad.

In the intro to the petition, Eilerman quotes Calhoun County Commissioner Terry Woelfel and board member, Doug Wilschetz, who both spoke against the court. Riverbender.com tried to reach out to Woelfel via email and Wilschetz via phone before this article went to print, but neither have replied.

"This basketball thing is kind of a nuisance out here," Eilerman quoted Woelfel.

"That's not what these grounds are for," Eilerman quoted Wilschetz.

"What's a nuisance is living in a county with very little for kids to do to occupy their time and get them outside, moving and not doing anything to hurt anyone!" Eilerman said in her petition. "What's a nuisance is people who don't understand that this pad is more than just a pad to these kids. And if the grounds aren't for our county, the people live in it, pay taxes in it raise kids in it, what are they for? Don't you represent us? Have you forgotten that you are supposed to be our voice? I for one would like to think that parking a few extra feet away would be far less of a nuisance than taking away a place for these kids to play!"

That petition can be found [here](#).