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ATTORNEY GENERAL

State of Louisiana
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
P.O. BOX 94005
BATON ROUGE
70804-9005

NOV 30 2015
OPINION 15-0142

Ms. Michelle L. Neil, Commissioner
Terrebonne Parish Recreation District No. 6
Post Office Box 51
107 Recreation Drive
Montegut, LA 70377

90-A-1 PUBLIC FUNDS & CONTRACTS
La. Const. art. VII, § 14
La. R.S. 42:267

The Terrebonne Parish Recreation District Number Six may name a portion of a walkway at its ballpark after any person, living or deceased.

Dear Ms. Neil,

Your request for an Attorney General's Opinion has been assigned to me for research and reply. On behalf of the Terrebonne Parish Recreation District Number Six ("District"), you have asked our opinion regarding the District's authority to name a portion of a walkway at a ballpark in honor of a living person.

The District owns and operates a park which consists of three baseball fields, a concession area, one football field surrounded by a walking track, one playground, two tennis courts, one swimming pool, and one gymnasium. According to your request, a past board member was instrumental in the conception and construction of concrete walkways which wind through the baseball fields within the park. You have inquired as to whether naming a section of this concrete walkway after the aforementioned board member is legally permissible.

As noted in your request, there are some limitations placed on the naming of public buildings. La. R.S. 42:267(A) provides:

A. Except as authorized or provided by law, no public building, public bridge, public park, public fish or game preserve, or public wildlife refuge owned by the state or by any political subdivision of the state or by any institution receiving its support in whole or in part from the state shall be named in honor of any living person.

This office has consistently interpreted La. R.S. 42:267 to prohibit the naming of an entire building after a living person. However, we have also concluded that naming a portion of a public building after a living person would not violate the statute. See, e.g.,

La. Atty. Gen. Op. Nos. 86-0814, 87-0188, 96-0394, 97-0206, 00-0066, 01-0375, 02-0260, 07-0170, 08-0244, 09-0083, and 09-0085. For example, in La. Atty. Gen. Op. No. 86-0814, we opined that a library contained within a school building could be named after a living person. La. Atty. Gen. Op. No. 00-0066 similarly concluded that a wing of the Baton Rouge Planetarium could be named after a living person. We have also determined that portions of a hospital building and individual hospital rooms may be named after a living person without violating state law. La. Atty. Gen. Op. No. 08-0244.

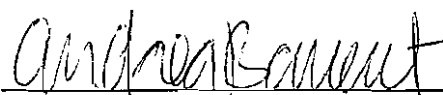
However, various attempts to construe a building as a "portion of a larger complex comprised of buildings" have not been persuasive. La. Atty. Gen. Op. No. 02-0260. See also La. Atty. Gen. Op. Nos. 87-0188 and 96-0394 (an auditorium at an elementary school may not be named after a living person); La. Atty. Gen. Op. Nos. 97-0206 and 07-0170 (naming a research park after a living person would violate state law); La. Atty. Gen. Op. No. 09-0083 (a gymnasium at an elementary school may not be named after a living person); and La. Atty. Gen. Op. No. 09-0085 (a small structure may not be named after a living person because it is not a portion of an existing building, but rather, a new building).

The specific structure described in your request is a section of concrete walkway contained within the District's baseball fields at a public park owned and operated by the District. We find this type of structure to be similar to a library within a school building, a wing of a planetarium, or a room in a hospital. Such a structure does not constitute a new or separate building, but rather, a portion of an existing structure which falls within the exception carved out by the aforementioned opinions. As such, it is the opinion of this office that the District may name a portion of a walkway at its ballpark after any person, living or deceased.

We hope this sufficiently answers your inquiry; however, if we may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

With best regards,

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By: 
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