



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 8, 2020

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LAWSUIT ALLEGES MISAPPROPRIATION OF CHARITABLE DONATIONS BY PARK RIDGE SPORTS, TREASURER LEACH AND PRESIDENT TOULON

Park Ridge Sports Suit Against Park Ridge Travel Falcons for Trademark Infringement is a Retaliatory Move

PARK RIDGE – The Park Ridge Travel Falcons and volunteer members of its board have filed legal action in federal court alleging Park Ridge Sports, Inc., its leadership, Treasurer Rob Leach and President Jim Toulon of misappropriating \$52,600 in charitable donations last year that was specifically earmarked for football helmets, jerseys and equipment for its players. Park Ridge Sports, Inc. operates as Park Ridge Football and Cheer.

In 2019, Park Ridge Sports, Inc. operated at a loss and had to pay back federal taxes due to fiscal mismanagement and a failure to file tax returns for several years, resulting in significant interest in penalties being paid as well. As a result, those same donors, who also were volunteer board members at the time, asked officials to provide a detailed, itemized record of expenses including how the earmarked donations were spent; Park Ridge Sports, Inc. and its officials refused this request. It should be noted this is an unusual response considering most charitable organizations share detailed financial information with its board members and major donors. Even more troubling, shortly after the request for financials and after the donations were made, Leach and Toulon spearheaded a vote to eliminate the travel Falcon division, including the board members.

Additional Legal Arguments

This legal action is included in a broader legal response and counterclaim filed by the Much Shelist, PC law firm in defense of the Park Ridge Travel Falcons and its volunteer board members. The legal proceeding aggressively refutes the trademark infringement lawsuit initially filed by Park Ridge Sports, Inc. against the Park Ridge Travel Falcons. When a vote was taken at the urging of certain board members to abandon the Park Ridge Falcons team, inherently they abandoned the name but even worse eliminated the opportunity for children to play competitive football. Moreover, lawyers for the Park Ridge Falcons make the legal argument that suing them for trademark infringement is akin to suing the Atlanta Falcons; meaning the Falcons moniker is a common name. Ultimately, the real basis for this lawsuit is not about a trademark but rooted in the desire to retaliate against the volunteer board members for using the Park Ridge Travel Falcons name. In the filing, the Park Ridge Travel Falcons and its individual board members are seeking relief and attorney costs resulting in the litigation initiated by Park Ridge Sports, Inc., and a relentless misinformation campaign at disparaging certain board members. Even more troubling, is the executive board of Rob Leach and Jim Toulon voted to sue the Park Ridge Travel Falcons board members *personally* that had been volunteers for the Falcons and personally donated substantial sums of money, by far the largest ever in league history.

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Historical Background (Park Ridge Sports and Park Ridge Travel Falcons)

- For decades, Park Ridge had two separate youth football programs accommodating kids of varying ages and skill sets, a travel team and house team. Both programs were autonomous.
- The **Division 1 team (Falcons)** was the traveling division comprised of teams of older children from sixth to eighth grade playing against more competitive teams in preparation for a higher-level of play in high school. The travel Falcons division typically has tryouts, longer seasons, and occasionally the championship Falcon teams would travel to Florida for season end championship tournaments.
- The **Division 2 house league** was the less competitive division but allowed children who wanted to play football an opportunity to participate, and they for 50 years were referred to as the house league and only played against other Park Ridge kids and teams, there were no tryouts and the practices were less frequent and started later in the summer. This was owned and operated by Park Ridge Sports, Inc.
- In 2015, the Division 1 travel team (Falcons) and the Division 2 house league decided to merge creating **one board** though both programs operated side-by-side. The Division 1 travel team continued to use the Falcons name while the Division 2 house league continued using the same NFL random team names.
- In 2019, board members earmarked \$52,600 in donations to be spent on the “Falcons” travel team.
- Subsequently, board members began questioning the spending practices overseen by Treasurer Rob Leach and Jim Toulon, in which Treasurer Leach acknowledged during a January 2020 board meeting **“We need to do a better job budgeting/controlling spending.”**
- In 2020, after the donations were made and the finances were questioned, Park Ridge Sports Inc. pushed for a divisive vote of the board (7-5) to eliminate the travel Falcons division and squeeze out the board members, reinforcing its decision to operate only a house league and told them to start their own league. Throughout this process and since, Rob Leach has engaged in a series of disparaging personal attacks and misinformation campaign at disparaging certain board members who made the substantial donations and requested the financials.
- Upon this vote, three former volunteer board members and the Director of Travel Football launched the Park Ridge Travel Falcons to continue to offer competitive travel play and return to the separation of the house and travel divisions.

“The Park Ridge Travel Falcons and its volunteer board members have been sued for nothing more than starting an organization to help continue the tradition of providing a world-class, travel football team for children after it was eliminated by a select few of individuals. For decades, Park Ridge has operated two football youth programs and the community leaders should be commended for filling this void. However, what should concern the community more is why Park Ridge Sports, Inc. refuses to share detailed reports how they spent substantial donations earmarked for equipment, yet still operated in the red and owing federal back taxes. The lack of transparency speaks volumes which is why they are defending themselves in court,” *said Ryan McLaughlin, spokesperson, Park Ridge Travel Falcons.*

About Park Ridge Travel Falcons

Football is the ultimate team sport. Our number one goal is for kids to have fun and stay safe while learning that commitment, hard work, sportsmanship, and the ability to learn will lead to success on and off the football field. The leadership of this organization is comprised of a group of committed volunteers, experienced coaches, well versed athletes and active community members who have joined forces to create a well-balanced, safe and competitive football league for young athletes looking to play competitive tackle football. Our coaches are trained, certified, experienced and qualified and our athletes range from 6th to 8th grade and bring different skill levels and experience to the playing field, all with a desire to play against some of the best travel youth football teams in the region. For more information, please visit www.prtravelfalcons.com.