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Dear BYS Members,

In July 2024, Bemidji Girls Fastpitch Softball (BGFSA), Bemidji Youth Baseball (BYBA), and Bemidji Youth Soccer (BYS) began exploring the Neilson-Reise Arena as a potential indoor sports facility to serve our organizations and the broader community. We conducted several site visits and meetings to assess its suitability and explored various grants. In December 2024, we approached the City of Bemidji and received City Council support to negotiate a lease for the building if funding is secured. In May of 2025, we continued the pursuit for funding and are thrilled to announce that we were awarded a generous donation of \$250,000 from the George W. Neilson Foundation to begin the project. This incredible support brings us one step closer to realizing our vision for a year-round sports facility for our youth and community.

Since then, our three organizations have formed the **Bemidji Indoor Sports Commission, Inc (BISC)**, which is the non-profit organization that will oversee the renovation and management of the facility. BISC is currently a Board of six, with two representatives from each organization. The Board will be expanded within the next 12 months to include key community partners and leaders.

As of tonight's City Council meeting, we are excited to announce that we have received approval for a 9-year lease of the building which means we have the official green light to move forward! We are sincerely grateful for the support from the Mayor, City Manager, and Council. They are very excited that the facility will be repurposed, and they especially loved that it was a collaborative effort among our organizations with a youth and community focused mindset.

### **Renovation Plans**

The renovated space will include:

- Artificial turf
- Two retractable batting cages (with a long-term goal of four)
- A walking track
- Handicap-accessible lift
- Fire alarm system
- Keyless entry system
- Protective film on spectator windows
- Updated locker rooms and workout spaces

At the request of the George W. Neilson Foundation, the renovated space will now be named the **Neilson Fieldhouse**.

## Operational and Usage Structure

The BISC Board of Directors is currently developing a usage agreement for the space. While we still need to work with the respective boards of each organization, in general, use will be granted in order of priority to:

- BGFSA, BYBA, and BYS members
- Other youth sports organizations
- Adult sports leagues, community groups and events

BGFSA, BYBA, and BYS will commit to investing a base amount from each organization to support operating costs and usage. We will work together to create a model that is fair with a goal to minimize the financial impact on our membership as much as possible. Additional revenue will be generated through renting the space to other organizations and groups, as well as sponsorships. A website with online scheduling will eventually be available for both members and the public.

## Next Steps and Volunteer Needs

1. **The remodel:** Our goal is to open the renovated Neilson Fieldhouse by the end of the year. To reach this goal, we will be asking for volunteers from each organization. Together we can make this vision a reality. This is a project to remember – one that will truly make a positive impact for our kids and the community for generations to come. Our partnership and power in numbers is our greatest asset to making this renovation a success. We will be reaching out for volunteers to help with clean-up as we move through the project. Heather Zimmel from BYBA will be coordinating this effort. Please keep an eye out for this request and help us gather volunteers. We know our lives are busy, but please find time to assist and join us in owning this project together.
2. **Sponsorships and donations:** We have established major donor and sponsorship levels including naming right opportunities and advertising space. BISC Board members have begun discussions with a few area businesses, but we could use your help to spread the word and generate excitement. Once the lease is signed, our Sponsorship Coordinator, Kelly Martinka from BYS, will send out additional details. In the meantime, if you come across a business that has interest in sponsorship, please contact Kelly at [bemidjiindoorsports@gmail.com](mailto:bemidjiindoorsports@gmail.com).

This is an exciting time. We can't wait to provide a dedicated and affordable space that our members and the community can exercise, compete, and advance their skills year-round. Thank you all for your dedicated membership and we are excited to partner together to make this vision a reality.

Sincerely,



## BISC Board of Directors

Caralee Nowak, President – Bemidji Girls Fastpitch Softball Association

Robert Elliott, Vice President – Bemidji Youth Soccer

Will Tysver, Treasurer - Bemidji Girls Fastpitch Softball Association

Kelly Martinka, Secretary – Bemidji Youth Soccer

Shannon Miller, At Large – Bemidji Youth Baseball

Heather Zimmel, At Large – Bemidji Youth Baseball

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