

Rodeo draws complaints

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cus," said county board member Charles Jefferson, whose district includes the backyard rodeo in a residential and commercial area north of Levings Park.

The Guerras' yard covers about five acres and includes an arena equipped with outdoor lighting, sound system, portable toilets, benches and folding chairs for spectators, and livestock stables.

County Zoning Administrator Eileen Hogshead said a special use permit is required to operate a rodeo at the site. The county could take Rubalcaba's family to court for operating without a permit.

But Hogshead said she drove through the neighborhood this summer and saw no evidence of large crowds or unusual activity.

"We'd have to have some proof, some evidence," she said.

Neighbor Jacqueline Sharp, who lives next door with her husband and two children, said she called the sheriff's department several times this summer to complain about large crowds, loud music and livestock odors coming from the rodeo.

She said the action seems to start up any time a crowd gathers, sometimes going from 11 a.m. until late at night. "They've had some really big crowds," she said. "I don't care what they want to do

on their property. But I don't want to hear it."

Across the street, however, tavern manager John Laster sees the rodeo as a way of bringing more customers into the neighborhood. He had no complaints about the crowds or the noise. In fact, he's talked to the rodeo operators about sponsoring events together.

Rubalcaba said her family intends to offer weekly rodeo demonstrations for the public starting next spring at a cost of \$8 a person. The family has hired Rockford attorney George Hampilos to prepare a special-use permit application, which Rubalcaba expects will be filed in a couple of weeks.

The proposal is drawing protests from animal-rights activists who contend that livestock are treated inhumanely in cowboy events.

Jim Beam, president of Society for Protection of Animals, Resources and the Environment (SPARE), said events such as calf roping and horse tripping often leave animals injured purely for spectators' entertainment.

He said some rodeos operate secretly to conceal the cruelty.

"They don't really want to attract outsiders," he said. "They keep it very much within their own community."



L.E. BASKOW / The Register Star

The La Tembladora Rodeos facility is on South Pierpont Avenue, 10 minutes west of downtown Rockford.

Rodeo events

Bronco busting: Cowboys take turns seeing who can stay longest on a horse that kicks its hind quarters violently into the air.

Bull riding: Same as bronco busting, but with bulls instead of horses.

Calf roping: Cowboys chase a calf across the arena and throw a rope around its neck to see how quickly the animal can be

captured.

Steer wrestling: Cowboys chase a steer across the arena, jump onto its back and wrestle the animal to the ground.

Horse tripping: Cowboys chase a bronco across the arena and try to rope its front quarters so that it trips and falls.

Barrel racing: Cowboys on horseback race slalom-style through the arena.