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SKATE PARK

Skateboarding an art form, a lifestyle, a sport...

Objective:

The subject of creating a public skateboard/inline skatepark in Southborough has generated a great deal of interest in the community. The Recreation Commission along with the skaters, parents and other supporters in Town would like to build a skate park facility for our community.

Skateboarding has become one of the fastest growing sports among children the ages of 10-18. Just as it is important for our soccer and lacrosse participants to have a safe playing surface, it is just as important for our skate boarders of this community to have the same. The children that enjoy this sport and want to improve their skills are doing so in unsafe, unauthorized locations in Town, such as parking lots (surrounded by traffic), the local train station and busy streets. As you may know, without a dedicated area for their sport, skaters have used steps, curbs, walls, and sidewalks throughout town. The impact of skater activities is financially burdensome to merchants and property owners who must repair the damage, and to the police department who must answer the complaints. However, a larger issue is that these athletes do not have a safe place to perfect their craft and to practice their skills. Clearly, a solution is needed.

Most of our skate boarders choose this activity over the more popular sports, and having a skate park in Town creates a safe haven for those children. They learn to be responsible and are in a positive atmosphere that encourages them to master their sport. Having a place to go will keep them active and feel accepted as part of the sports community. Since the advent of the skatepark, communities which have them reported above-average use when compared to facilities such as baseball fields. This means greater value for each dollar spent.

We realize that there are skate parks located in surrounding Towns and our skaters could use those facilities. Currently, our skaters do use those facilities but this is less than ideal because their parents are not always able to drive them there and they cannot walk or ride their bike that far. Also, because there are so few of these facilities in the MetroWest area, they can be over crowded and waiting for your turn to skate safely can take up a lot of good skate time.

The skaters in our Town are passionate about their sport and they need a safe environment in which to improve their skills. It is the responsibility of the Recreation Commission to make sure that all our residents have a safe and healthy place for activities. We realize that skate boarding may not be the majority sport but it is just as important.

A group of very committed and dedicated skaters and their parents has come forward to work with the Recreation Department to plan, design, and help fund this proposed facility. It is the intent of the Recreation Commission that our skaters play an active role in this project. This will not only be a great learning experience but it will encourage them to take care of their facility.

Proposed Site: Studies show that a convenient and central location is needed for such a project. The Choate fields at Woodward School lend themselves perfectly for this venture. The site combines a wide variety of existing recreational uses, minimizes impacts on residential neighborhoods, and is in close proximity to the Library, Woodward School and, more importantly, the Southborough Police Department. All of these assets combined provide a safe and visible location. According to the MIIA guidelines when determining a site you should consider 2.0 square feet per skater in the community. Using the formulas provided by MIIA we would need a minimum of 828 square feet. The Choate site is more than adequate at over 6,000 square feet and provides easy access to police for security and safety.

Clientele: This skate park will be built primarily for the Southborough skaters.

Design/Construction: Design of a skate park is just as crucial as the material it is made out of. The layout of elements can render a park functional or useless. If done properly we will have a successful and safe facility. Just as important is the material used to construct the park. There are many options to choose from but our preliminary findings indicate that concrete is the safest surface for a skate park. We intend to research firms, both regional and national, that design and construct skateparks to get a better understanding of this process. We propose to use the expertise and assistance of professional skatepark designers, the skaters themselves, various town departments, and the community at large to make the skateboard park a true community project. We also plan to visit newly constructed and incredibly popular skateparks in the area and meet extensively with the community managers of these parks, to learn the best approach for our project, and to learn from their mistakes.

- The design and construction will be done by professionals in the industry
- Will also include input from our skaters
- Will also be following the MIIA Skate Park Guidelines

Maintenance: Maintenance free parks do not exist. However, skateparks generally require very little maintenance when compared to other municipal parks and facilities. We will incorporate an inspection and maintenance program for this facility and records will be kept as we do for all our other facilities.

Risk Factors: Some communities refuse to build skateparks because they view skateboarding as an inherently dangerous activity and dread the prospect of injury claims. However, evidence shows that both of these notions are largely unfounded. According to the Consumer Products Safety Commission, skateboarding has a smaller percentage of reported injuries per participant (.49%) than soccer (.93%), baseball (2.25%), and basketball (1.49%). Granted, many skateboarding accidents are simply not reported – but this speaks well of skateboarders, who apparently feel that safety is their responsibility, as are injuries when they happen.

To protect against liability MIIA strongly recommends that supervision **not** be provided as this would nullify the “skate at your own risk” warning that should be posted. This warning will be posted along with other clearly stated rules and regulations; there are many available models that we can research and adopt. In addition to abundant signage it will be enclosed by a fence with access through a single gate.

Operating Cost: Operating costs for a concrete park are minimal, if any at all. There could be the occasional repair to fencing and weeding. As for the concrete itself we may encounter some graffiti that will need to be painted over.

Funding: Fundraising and grants.

The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce the project to the Board of Selectmen and begin a community dialogue about this very important recreation project.