



MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION held Wednesday, October 30, 2002, for the purpose of discussing plans for a Skateboard Park.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:00 p.m. It was held in the Multipurpose Room of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Rodney M. Roberts, Edward V. J. Putens, Alan Turnbull, and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Hank Irving, Joe McNeal, and Greg Varda, Recreation Department; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk. MPO John Rogers, Police Department, attended briefly.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: about 30 people, many representing the Skateboard Coalition. Among those present were Donna Osler of the Coalition and Doug Mangum of the Coalition and the Youth Advisory Committee; Silke Pope, Public Safety Advisory Committee; Bunny Fitzgerald, Senior Citizens Advisory Committee; Dan Genz, Washington Post; and Al Geiger, Greenbelt News Review.

The Mayor opened the meeting by assuring the young people in audience that everyone is agreed that there should be a skateboard park in Greenbelt. The need does not require debate; the issues to be resolved are where to put it and how to do it.

Noting that Council had earmarked \$60,000 in the current year's budget for the skateboard park, Mr. Irving showed a short videotape about various aspects of skateboard park facilities. He noted that Baltimore County has announced it will build three skateboard facilities and will be going out on bid soon. He said the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPP) has also announced that it is looking at sites for a county park in this area but does not yet have the funding in hand. Mr. Irving said the City Manager had asked him to talk with M-NCPPC to see if there might be partnering possibilities with the City. He added that Greenbelt believes there needs to be staff supervision at the site, with the result that the City is looking not only at siting and installation costs but also personnel.

In response to a question from Mr. McLaughlin, Ms. Osler said the Skateboard Coalition formed in August and has 42 members.

Mayor Davis asked staff if there was a recommendation on sites. Mr. McNeal said the August staff report had listed the sites in order of staff preference but that the situation had evolved since then. Candy Cane City and the sand volleyball court on Braden Field were both removed from the site list because of environmental issues. He noted that the sites numbered 1 (Lakecrest tennis courts) and 4 (tennis courts #7 and #8 at Braden Field) in the report have existing fencing and ground surface, which would lower the front-end costs.

The Skateboard Coalition indicated that site #4 was its first choice. Mr. Mangum said there is already a foundation, it is centrally located in terms of existing recreational facilities and amenities, and it is the largest site. He said he thought it was important to go with the largest site possible since there is no doubt that when it is built, "kids will come out of the walls." He added that site #3(the open area between the Community Center and Youth Center) is their second choice.

Mr. Irving stated that without doubt there would be objections from tennis players about that choice; on the other hand, he said, some tennis people he had spoken with indicated that if the trade-off of losing two courts would be keeping the skateboarders off the remaining tennis courts, it might be worth sacrificing the two.

The Mayor asked if anyone in the audience wanted to suggest any other sites not on the list. There was one suggestion of a part of Braden Field; however, Mayor Davis said concerns had already been brought to Council about a need for more ball fields.

Mr. Roberts asked why a 10' fence is needed. Mr. Irving said that seems to be the standard. Mr. Roberts replied that his first choice would be site #3 except that he would not want a 10' fence at that location.

Mr. Irving pointed out that Larry Hilliard of the Park & Recreation Advisory Board had suggested locating the park in part of Beltway Plaza's parking lot, with the idea that a skateboard park would be a positive addition to Springhill Lake. Mayor Davis said such a location would not be under City control but she noted there is a grassy area behind the Recreation Center at Springhill Lake.

Eileen Peterson of the Coalition encouraged using the largest suitable space. She said site #3 would impact the parking situation at the library, whereas boarders from the north side of town could more easily walk or board down to site #4. Someone commented that most of the users of the skateboard park will not be driving cars.

Mr. Putens asked how many of those in attendance were in favor of site #4, and the majority of those present raised their hands.

There was some discussion of different types of installation. Mr. Irving said there are quite a few different vendors and that the City will probably need to put it out on bid. Mayor Davis noted that there are two major types: flat surface and bowl-shaped. Regarding the different types of materials, Mr. McNeal said that strictly from an operator and maintenance point of view all-steel is probably the superior material, but it presents a noise issue. The coalition expressed a preference for a non-metal surface. The Coalition was asked to name representatives to travel with staff from the Recreation Department to visit skateboard parks in the region in order to fine-tune what the City wants.

Mayor Davis emphasized that when the City does this, activities will be supervised, and there will be rules and requirements for protective gear. Mr. Irving added that there will be positions for people who would like to work as court attendants and assistant attendants.

There was discussion of the intended lighting for the park.

Mr. Roberts asked if there is need for more dialogue with the tennis people. Mr. Turnbull said that he was also concerned with the liability staff had listed for site #4 that the "proposed use is incompatible with other nearby activities and user groups." He said he would like to hear some elaboration on that and analysis of whether this incompatibility can be resolved or not. He added that he thought St. Hugh's should be notified. Mr. Irving agreed and said there should be notification to Lakeside homeowners as well.

With regard to time frame, Mr. McLaughlin said this work session was the first step. He said ideally staff would develop plans far enough to bring them to Council's December 16 regular meeting for approval to proceed. The project could then go out to bid in January or February. Mr. Irving said the surface work needs to be done in the spring. The goal would be to have the park in operation by next summer.

Other Business

There was discussion of holding a reception for the City's outgoing delegation from the 23rd District early in January on a Saturday.

Mayor Davis said it was announced at a Neighborhood Improvement Team meeting that the Head Start program at Springhill Lake is open. Council will be invited to an opening event. She also announced that the City had received \$90,000 of the \$100,000 requested from the Legacy program.

The meeting ended at about 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk