

Nyack Parks Commission January 2013 Meeting

Attended by:

James Willcox, Chair

Bert Hughes, Vice-Chair

Marcy Denker

Steve Guarascio

Carolyn Cairns

Discussion of playground initiative: Parks Commission will help the ad hoc playground committee start a visioning process. Marcy and Anne Brooke will develop a concept plan to use as a starting point, which can be presented to the community to get their input.

Short discussion of the U.S. Tennis Association's efforts to renovation tennis courts located just south of Cedar Hill Avenue on the border of Nyack and South Nyack. Melody Partrick, Nyack's the new Recreation Director, had previously explained her efforts to work with the USTA to get the tennis courts renovated and develop tennis programs for Nyack youth.

Henry "Randy" Rand, a candidate for the open commissioner slot on the Parks Commission, attended the meeting to discuss his interest in joining the Commission. Randy is a mechanical and chemical engineer, and is a frequent user of Memorial Park.

Skate park meeting. Melody Partrick and Joseph Ondrek came on behalf of Sarah Anderson, who is leading a group that would like to see a skate park built in Memorial Park. (Sarah had to miss the meeting due to an illness in her family.) The proposed location is adjacent to the new basketball court, where a second court (half court) was envisioned. The Village doesn't have the money to build that second court, and the skate park group intends to raise all the funding (estimated \$100,000), so no Village funding is required. During the meeting, the Commission was informed that:

- Skateboarding is the third most popular sport among 8 to 18 year olds
- There are 725 skaters in the Nyacks
- The group now has a petition with more than 625 signatures
- Over 100 skaters of all ages, races, and genders participated in a skating event held in the Riverspace parking lot.

Melody said she's considering that a skate park could be used to develop a recreation program down the road, and mentioned other cities/villages that do something similar, including after-school skating programs.

Jim asked about the Village's liability, and whether "Skate at Your Own Risk" signs indemnify the Village. The Commission was told that Sarah has researched that question, calling communities in the area. Apparently, skate-at-your-own-risk parks have worked in other communities, and if it's self-policing—no supervision by a Village representative or agent—the Village's liability is actually reduced. The Commission said it would ask the Village attorney how a skate park would affect insurance premiums.

The proposed skate park is a plaza, not a bowl, so its impact on Memorial Park wouldn't be as great. There would be integrated passive use space; no bowls and half-pipes, but instead stairs, ledges, rails. There would be room for spectators to watch the skate activities, and many of the features could also be used as seating when no one is skating. The design is still open for discussion; current thinking is that it would occupy about 4,500 square feet. Joseph said that skating is a year-round sport, so it would encourage park use in the winter.

Marcy raised concerns from other committees about the possible "free-for-all" approach to next stage of the park plan, and stressed the need for process of integrated design.

The question of who will be responsible for maintenance—the skate group or the Village—was raised, as well as the degree of maintenance that will be required. A skate park in Congers that used a lot of wood is now in disrepair. Joseph said the proposed skate park would likely be built using poured concrete, which is more durable. Other issues—trash, rocks/leaves/etc—were mentioned. Bert stressed that anything would require some level of maintenance. Stamford has a huge facility with substantial accumulated debris; the city has a blower, but skaters that use it usually assume responsibility. "Skaters take a lot of ownership over their skate parks," Joseph Ondrek told the Commission.

There was a question about the perceptions of skaters, and whether there's a stereotype that's problematic for those trying to get a skate park built. The commission was told that Sarah investigated this question, and in her outreach she heard only two strong objections, and only one based on perception of skaters. BMXers (bikers) would likely be interested in using the facility as well, but scale of this project isn't likely to make it very attractive to them.

The possibility of a multi-purpose skate park (for ice skating or tennis) was raised. There are possibilities, provided set-up wouldn't destroy the concrete.

Some outstanding questions remain, including the best location, whether the area for the second basketball court should be preserved for that purpose, and whether there is a desire and space for both. Is there a community need and how does it compare to competing needs – e.g. basketball. The Commission is concerned about denying some members of the community what was initially promised (the second basketball court),

and wants there to be sufficient community outreach to determine community wants and needs. There was a suggestion that perhaps the new tennis courts being proposed could double as an additional basketball court.

The Parks Commission suggested that the skate park group move forward with its plans as community outreach begins. There was a general sense that several Commissioners were in favor of the skate park if the community backs it, but a final recommendation to the Village Board is being withheld until the Nyack community has a chance to weigh in.