



R-25

Date: July 3, 2007

To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

From: Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District *GS*

Subject: AGENDA ITEM: Summary of Public Meeting on El Dorado Skate Park and Related Recommendations

DISCUSSION

On April 18, 2007 the Long Beach's 5th District Youth Council conducted a public meeting to discuss safety issues related to the El Dorado Skate Park. A meeting was called after a plastic awning near the skate park was set on fire and burned away completely. Additionally, some members of public had discussed temporarily closing the park.

Fifth District Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske asked the 5th District Youth Council to hold the meeting and to have Dr. Lydia Hollie, Chair of the Long Beach Youth and Gang Violence Prevention Task Force provide the Youth Council with training about how to conduct a public hearing that is respectful and inclusive. This experience was not only a public process to discuss issues related to the El Dorado Skate Park, but also an experience in civic duty for several members of the 5th District Youth Advisory Council. The panel for the hearing consisted of Youth Council Members, Chair, Mackenzie Martin, Joseph Robinson, Ben Garcia, Secretary Ben Tolksdorf, and Shannon Diaz. Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske and Dr. Hollie were also on the panel.

Minutes of the meeting were taken by, Marla S. Camerino, who provides clerical support to the Park, Recreation and Marine Department. Those minutes are attached for your review.

Several individuals testified at the hearing:

- Phil T. Hester, Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine, City of Long Beach
- Harry Saltzgaver, Chair of Recreation and Parks Commission, City of Long Beach
- Chrissy Marshall, Recreation Bureau Manager, City of Long Beach
- Lt. Joseph Stilinovich, Long Beach Park Ranger Program
- Steve Van Dorn, Community Relations Director, Vans Skate park at the Block
- Ed Croft, Recreation Manager, City of Irvine
- Rafael Coleman, Public
- Robert Winn, Public
- Ray Olsen, Public
- Wilson Taylor, Public
- Mike Donelon, former councilmember, City of Long Beach
- Mike Pusera, Public

- Kirt Peterman, Public

A number of important facts came out of this hearing, which are the basis of the recommendations included in this report. Additionally, one item of special note that was Steve Van Doren of *Van's* offer to donate fifty skateboard helmets and padding to the Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine for use by skaters at the El Dorado Skate Park. Van's owns and operates several private skate parks as well as manufactures gear and shoes. (Following the meeting, Anthony Batts, Chief of Police, provided Councilwoman Schipske with the attached report on "Request for Calls for Service and Crime Statistics Data at El Dorado West Skate Park.")

After the hearing was conducted, the 5th Council Youth Council held an additional meeting on June 7th, to review the hearing minutes and to approve the following recommendations which they are forwarding to this City Council for approval:

A) Remove the requirement that users of the skate park must wear protective gear or face citation by Park Rangers.

Many activities undertaken by users of the City parks involve a risk of some sort without the City enforcing the use of protective gear. For instance, baseball and soccer players are not required by the City to wear protective gear in order to play on City fields and are not cited if they fail to wear protective gear.

Moreover, many users of the skate park cannot afford to purchase protective gear, and the citation of \$200 for failure to wear the gear is a great financial burden on many of the families from which the users come. Furthermore, the citations are not done on a consistent basis since there is no supervision at the park. Finally, users of the skate park often ride the public transit system to get to El Dorado Park and cannot carry helmets, skateboard and padding gear. (Testimony was given that not one city has been sued since public skate parks have been installed. Users of these parks understand they are assuming a risk.) Chief Batts is his report that of the 57 "requests for service" at the skate park, 31 were for "failure to wear safety equipment."

B) Improve the signage at the skate park to inform users that they are skate boarding at their own risk and that it is recommended to wear safety equipment.

Signs should be graphically appealing and sufficiently large enough that skaters can read them. Signs should show skate boarders wearing protective gear as encouragement to do the same. The safety gear donated by Van's could be available for those who wish to use safety gear.

C) Utilize a full time recreation leader at the skate park to engage the youth who skate there.

Many of the youth using the skate park do so as their only safe outlet and to be with other youth. Instead of using Park Rangers to issue citations against youth, several cities utilize recreation leaders who know how to skate as a way of engaging these youth in activities. The current situation in Long Beach does not provide a positive engagement for the hundreds of youth who use the skate park. The only experience most have with city employees -- is with Park Rangers who issue them citations for failing to wear safety gear that they cannot afford to purchase. Park Rangers should only be called to the skate park when there is a problem that the park leader cannot handle.

D) Establish a public-private partnership that will enable improvements in the skate park.

The donation of helmets by Van's is a start in what could be a positive public-private partnership to improve the skate park and to offer skaters safety gear if they want to wear it. A recreation leader can check out the donated helmets and padding being donated by Van's. Additionally, the City should explore other public-private partnerships with companies such as Coca Cola, Pepsi or Tony Hawk (a major skate board manufacturer and guru) to raise needed funds to address some of the issues presented by skaters about the inadequacies of the skate park in its design and maintenance.

E) Involve skaters in cleaning up the skate park and setting specific days and times for skate park events -- such as younger age skater days and times.

Residents who bring their young children to the skate park have expressed concerns that the mix of young children, older youth and sometimes adults in a very confined space to skate causes problems. By establishing specific times for each age group (as is done in the Belmont Shore Pool), this problem would be eliminated. It is further recommended that recreation leaders schedule specific activities at the skate park (i.e. contests, etc.) as another way to positively engage the youth who are using the park.

Skaters have indicated that they want to be involved in what happens with the skate park and that they have a "code of conduct" among themselves about taking care of things around the skate park when there is trouble. It is recommended that these same skaters be involved on a regular basis in clean up and painting the skate park and surrounding areas.

F) Explore how the design of the skate park might be enhanced to meet the concerns of users who complain about its poor, non-functional design.

A consistent complaint of the users of the skate park was its poor design, lack of maintenance of the concrete and the fact that it is non-functional for current skate board use. Specifically, the shortness of the ramps and the lack of rails and other structures on which to "grind" were cited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is therefore recommended that the City Council:

- 1) Receive and file report on April 18, 2007 El Dorado West Skate Park Public Meeting;
- 2) Refer the following suggestions to the Park and Recreation Commission for review and approval:
 - A) **Remove the requirement that users of the skate park must wear protective gear or face citation by Park Rangers.**
 - B) **Improve the signage at the skate park informing users that they are skateboarding at their own risk.**
 - C) **Utilize a full time recreation leader at the skate park to engage the youth who skate there.**
 - D) **Establish a public-private partnership that will enable improvements in the skate park.**
 - E) **Involve skaters in cleaning up the skate park and setting specific days and times for skate park events.**
 - F) **Explore how the design of the skate park might be enhanced to meet the concerns of users who complain about its poor, non-functional design.**

Respectfully submitted by: Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District

Attachments: Minutes, April 18, 2007 Public Hearing on the El Dorado West SkateBoard Requests for Calls for Service and Crime Statistics Data at El Dorado West Skate Park

CITY OF LONG BEACH

**GERRIE SCHIPSKE
COUNCILWOMAN, FIFTH DISTRICT**

5TH DISTRICT YOUTH COUNCIL

PUBLIC HEARING ON EL DORADO SKATEBOARD PARK

**MINUTES
April 18, 2007**

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Councilwoman Gerri Schipske welcomed those in attendance, and stated that the purpose of this hearing is to have the 5th District Youth Council facilitate a public hearing on some of the issues that have been going on regarding the continued operations of the skate park at El Dorado Park West.

Councilwoman Schipske stated that the 5th District Youth Council is not here to answer questions; they are here to listen to testimonials of invited guest and the public.

II. PANEL MEMBERS

Councilwoman Schipske introduced the members of the 5th District Youth Council. In addition, the Chair of the Youth and Gang Violence Prevention Task Force, Dr. Lydia A. Hollie, was on hand to mediate the hearing.

Dr. Hollie thanked everyone for attending to lend a voice to the issue. Dr. Hollie went over the communication guidelines for the hearing.

III. INDIVIDUALS INVITED TO GIVE TESTIMONY

1. Phil T. Hester, Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine: Overview of the Skateboard Park History

Mr. Hester stated that the skate park came about as a result of a group of kids that went to City Council to address the need for a skating facility. The City Council referred this matter over to the Parks and Recreation Commission, who assist in making the recommendations to City Council dealing with Parks and Recreation issues.

Parks and Recreation Commission hosted a large number of public meetings. The Parks and Recreation Commission made a recommendation to City Council for five skate parks to be developed throughout the city. The first skate park was built at El Dorado Park West, and the second skate park was built at Houghton Park. The difference between Houghton and El Dorado Skate Parks is that Houghton Skate Park accommodates the bikers of the community. The remaining three skate parks were scheduled to be built at Recreation, Admiral Kidd, Silverado or Veterans, and Sports Park. Due to funding, the skate parks have not been built.

There was a tremendous amount of discussion regarding safety and liability, whether to fence in the facility, whether to supervise the facility or not, and whether to charge a fee. Based on research and testimony that was provided at the time it was decided that the skate park would not be supervised, and that we would be more liable if we did.

Mr. Hester stated that we are here to listen and obtain feedback from the users of the skate park and anyone else who might have interest.

2. Harry Saltzgaver, Chair of Recreation and Parks Commission: Commission and the Skateboard Park

Mr. Saltzgaver stated that he was here to listen and to find out what is going on to try to make the best decision with the information that is available.

Mr. Saltzgaver stated that he wanted to give the Youth Council on what the Commission's mindset is regarding the Skate Parks in general. He stated that he is not sure what is going on since the El Dorado Park skate park has not been discussed as a Commission at all in the last year that he is aware of. Mr. Saltzgaver stated that he is a skate park enthusiast, and stated that the first thing he did as a Commissioner was to sit on the Houghton Park Skate Park hearings, which was important due to issues with BMX bikers and skateboarders. He sat at each meeting, and was assured that they did not need the City to set rules for them. They would be able to work out their issues with each other, and to his knowledge they worked it out.

Mr. Saltzgaver stated that at Houghton Park had a serious problem with graffiti; however, now that a mural has been painted in the skate park the graffiti is limited. Unfortunately, there are still enforcement problems because there is no supervision of big kids/little kids both at Houghton and El Dorado West Parks.

Mr. Saltzgaver stated that we do not have the resources to supervise the skate park. In addition, if we do supervise the skate park, we would be more liable.

3. Chrissy Marshall, Recreation Bureau Manager: Overview of Mobile Skateboard Program

Gladys Kaiser, Recreation Superintendent, spoke on behalf of Chrissy Marshall regarding the Mobile Skate Park Program.

Mrs. Kaiser stated that the Mobile Skate Park program operates six days a week at various sites. The program is at Davenport Park on Mondays, at California Recreation Center on Tuesdays, at Bixby Knolls on Wednesdays, at Veterans Park on Thursdays, at the Marine Stadium on Fridays, and at Stearns Champions Park on Saturdays.

Mrs. Kaiser stated that our goal is to take the mobile truck, staff and equipment to service residents of Long Beach that are not near skate parks. The program provides elements, protective gear, skateboards, and scooters.

The program is very successful and has been operating since 1999.

4. Lt. Joseph Stilinovich, Long Beach Park Ranger Program: Overview of Safety Issues at the Skate Park

Lt. Stilinovich stated that he did not have the benefits back then, then what we have today; he did not have a skate park. He stated that the responsibility that you need to take on is to monitor yourself and your peers. He stated that it is not his, the Park Rangers, or the city's responsibility to come in and enforce the law. The rules are there to protect you.

Lt. Stilinovich mentioned the "Broken Window Theory." He stated that all it takes is for one window to be broken in a car for things to happen (i.e. stereo missing, breaking all windows, etc.). They are trying to prevent these things from happening at skate parks. When they go out and enforce equipment violations, etc., they are only there to prevent bigger issues from happening.

Lt. Stilinovich stated that most of the calls for requests to come out are from parents that are at skate parks.

- Councilwoman Schipske wanted to know approximately how many calls are received. Lt. Stilinovich did not have the statistics with him. Councilwoman Schipske requested the statistics from Lt. Stilinovich.

5. Steve Van Dorn, Community Relations Director: Vans Skateboard Park at The Block

Mr. Van Dorn stated that he currently operates two Skate Parks. He stated that he came to the hearing to listen. He stated that whether you fence the Skate Park or not, it is up to you. Mr. Van Dorn suggested having different nights for skaters and different nights for bikers.

6. Ed Croft, Recreation Manager, City of Irvine: Overview of their Skateboard Program and Why They Chose to Fence, Supervise and Charge a Small Entrance Fee for their Skateboard Park

Mr. Croft stated that he is the Superintendent of the City of Irvine. He stated that one of his responsibilities is to oversee the staff at the skate park. The City of Irvine does not charge an admission fee. They made the decision to staff the Skate Park because it was the right thing to do. In the years that they have been operating, they have not had a claim. Staff at the skate park are not there for enforcement or for security, they are there to be leaders. They try to hire staff that are skaters themselves so staff can relate to the kids, and to set a positive relationship between staff and skaters.

The City of Irvine as only one permanent skate park that is fenced in, and opens from 2:00 to 8:00 p.m., and when the kids are out of school the park opens from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Mr. Croft stated that they do have a Mobile Skate Program, which is supervised. They try to take out skateboarding and ramps and apparatuses similar to the courtyard atmosphere into the communities.

Mayor Bob Foster made a special appearance at the hearing. He thanked the Youth Advisory Council for taking the time to be at the hearing.

7. Testimony from the Public

Mr. Rafael Coleman, Jr. is a resident of the Seventh District, and has been riding BMX since he was 14 years of age. Mr. Coleman stated that the skate parks are a great thing. He stated that there will always be problems in terms of recreation, but it out ways the bigger picture. You give the kids an alternative other than gang bangers or writing on walls.

Mr. Robert Winn stated that he most of the older kids do not use safety equipment. We can get positive peer pressure to keep safety equipment on, or have someone supervise to keep the safety equipment available.

Mr. Ray Olsen stated that liability and supervision goes along together. He stated that there are things that are not addressed because there is no communication, at a real level, between the skateboarders and the city. Including no ambassador between the two to allow communication of how to properly take care of the equipment and to respect the facility. Suggested having all skaters sign waivers, with skaters under the age of 18 having to have a parent signature and must wear safety equipment. Those older than 18 years of age do not need to wear the equipment. He stated that the skate park was not built properly, which is why he and the skaters do not

show respect for the park. If we move forward with building the skate park, we need to get people who know how to build skate parks. In addition, he stated that nine times out of ten skaters claim their own liability.

Mr. Wilson Taylor stated he along with other people got everything rolling with the skate park when it was first built. He stated Vans Skate Park and every other skate park that he has gone to use some type of waivers. He stated that someone does not need to be out there, that we could have signs posted that have pictures of kids wearing helmets, kids wearing pads. He stated that you do not have to have someone out there 24 hours a day/7 days a week watching over the kids. That is not your job. A lot of kids that come to the skate park do not have money to buy their own equipment. No matter whether the kids gets hurt, the one thing that a biker or skateboarder has in their mind is that if I fall, I'm going to get up and do it again until I get it done or feel a self a completion. The whole point of a skate park is for them to get off of the streets. If you were to charge, people do not have money to buy the helmet or money to buy pads. Some people don't even have money to eat lunch at school, so what do they do, they get the free lunch and don't tell anyone. They don't want to tell their friends that they do not have money to go to the skate park today, so they just are not going to come, they are just going to find somewhere else to skate, where they can get into trouble. He stated that there are a lot of things that need to be considered before the next skate park is built. He stated that if you want something done right, you have to wait.

Mr. Mike Donlin stated that what you are doing here tonight is good. He stated that the language of an assembly bill was negotiated between him and Assemblymember Betty Karnette's office. He stated that they went through everything from waivers, liability issues, age, etc.

He stated that out of all the in the parks and recreation facilities, the skate park is the most racially diverse group of kids. He stated that out of the hundreds of thousands of kids that use the skate park, there has never been a claim against a city on a free public skate park in the State of California, and stated that liability is an issue for kids getting hurt but not for the city.

He stated that thousands of kids from the inner city couldn't afford equipment. You fine kids, kids can't pay, and we make criminals out of kids.

He stated that the Southern California Skate Park Coalition meets every other month. They have the same problems that Long Beach has. He stated that the website is www.socal skate park.org, and suggested we go on-line and see what the group is all about.

He stated that we can't solve all the problems, and that it is difficult to have good kids make bad kids good. We have to be careful about the burden we put on the good kids to make the bad kids good.

Mr. Van Dorn stated that his company would be happy to donate 50 helmets to future parks for at risk youth.

Mr. Mike Pusera stated that he as been coming to El Do for years and now lives in La Habra but still comes to El Do. He stated that the biggest issue is the helmet law. The best idea is to have supervision and have an age limit. He stated that waivers are a good idea, and that adults should sign in.

Mr. Kirt Peterman stated that he has been skating for three years. He stated that he understands the all the ideas about the waivers and the liability. He stated that parents cannot come to El Do to sign waivers everyday. He thinks having the waivers is a good idea, but does not think it is going to work. He believes that helmets, kneepads, and elbow pads are good ideas, but you are not falling on your knees and elbows. You are falling on your face. He stated that every fall cannot be protected.

Mr. Ray Olsen stated that he heard rumors of filling in the skate park, which is a waste of time. He stated that we should use the funds to expand and maintain the skate park instead.

Mr. Harry Saltzgaver stated that the rumor of shutting down or filling up the skate park did not start from the city, and Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske reiterated the same.

Mr. Ray Olsen stated that only one waiver would need to be signed. The waiver will be kept on file so when the skater comes back he does have to get another waiver signed.

The Youth Council thanked everyone for coming tonight, and that they value all of their opinions. At the next monthly meeting they will discuss what was said tonight.

Respectfully submitted,

Marla S. Camerino
Long Beach Park, Recreation and Marine
Clerical Support



Date: June 6, 2007
To: Gerald R. Miller, City Manager *my eye*
From: Anthony W. Batts, Chief of Police *AWB*
For: Gerrie Schipske, Councilwoman, Fifth District
Subject: **REQUEST FOR CALLS FOR SERVICE AND CRIME STATISTICS DATA AT EL DORADO WEST SKATE PARK**

On April 18, 2007, during a meeting of her Youth Advisory Committee, Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske made a request for Calls for Service and Crime Statistics data specifically related to the El Dorado West Skate Park. This memorandum was prepared in response to that request.

Calls for Service

From May 5, 2006 through April 9, 2007, we were able to identify 37 calls for service at the skate park, which included both officer initiated and dispatched calls for service. Of those 37 calls, 16 were dispatches for groups/juveniles causing some type of disturbance, 12 were officer initiated calls to conduct investigations, five were dispatches to suspicious persons or drug/alcohol related activities, two were for mentally impaired individuals, one to provide assistance, and one for a petty theft report.

Identifying all calls related to the Skate Park can be very challenging. The Skate Park does not have its own specific address so oftentimes calls are entered into the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) System using 2800 Studebaker, the address for El Dorado Park West, or by using the street names of a nearby intersection. At other times, the person(s) making the calls will go home or to a nearby business to initiate the call for service. Consequently the CAD System captures the dispatch location and not skate park location. Due to these limitations of the CAD system, actual calls for service related to the skate park are likely to be slightly higher.

Crime Statistics and Enforcement Action

When researching crime statistics and enforcement actions, we encountered similar difficulties identifying crimes and incidents that specifically occurred at the skate park. In our efforts to provide the most accurate data, we performed a hand search of all crime reports, misdemeanor citations, and arrests related to any incidents that occurred in or near El Dorado Park West. Only those incidents that were found to have a direct nexus to the skate park were documented in this memorandum. There may have been incidents that originated from patrons of the skate park, but if those incidents were not documented as occurring "at the skate park", they were not included in the summary.

The following is a two-year comparison of 15 separate crime categories:

**SUMMARY OF REPORTS/CITES ISSUED AT THE ELDORADO SKATE PARK
05/01/2006 - 04/30/2007 vs. 05/01/2005 - 04/30/2006**

CHARGE	05/01/06- 04/30/07	05/01/05- 04/30/06
Petty Theft	2	1
Grand Theft Property	1	1
Robbery Person	3	0
Battery	1	2
Skate Park-Must Wear Safety Equip	31 cites	27 cites
Skate Park-Other Person in Designated Area	2 cites	4 cites
Skate Park-No Bike/Scooter Permitted	4 cites	2 cites
Skate Park-Must Use Surface/Equip	1 cite	2 cites
Minor in possession of alcohol	6	1
Possession of marijuana	2	0
Open alcohol container	1	0
Drunk in public	0	1
Trespassing	2	0
Minor in possession of cigarettes	0	3
Arson	1	0
TOTAL	57	44

If you have any further questions or comments, please call me at extension 8-7301.

AWB:JS:RSH:rh- COP STAFF - JC/vhd
Skate Park