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## Town to erect fence around Lamorinda Skatepark due to non-compliance of rules and vandalism

By Vera Kochan



Aerial view of proposed perimeter skatepark fence Image provided

complaints from residents regarding non-compliance of COVID regulations (lack of mask-wearing and social distancing). Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg acknowledged that the skatepark has seen ongoing problems for several years prior to the pandemic.

MPD has responded to many of the behavioral complaints, only to have the activities resume once officers have left the premises. The police have been hesitant to pursue punitive measures at the risk of creating a hostile relationship with the mostly juvenile offenders. The constant monitoring of the skatepark has become less cost-efficient and takes police away from focusing on overall public safety and crime.

During the March 10 town council presentation, King stated, "My officers were met with such language, that I'm not going to repeat it in this public forum, by young teenagers who were using the park and took offense to the fact that the police officers were there, including me, trying to enforce the safety rules and what have you."

Town staff has looked into less drastic measures before coming up with the final permanent fence option. The possibility of a temporary chain link fence was explored. While it would close the skatepark, its design would not effectively keep users out, and it would cost approximately \$7,000 to install, not to mention mounting labor costs required to set up and remove a temporary fence on a regular basis.

Another option was to have a non-sworn staff person onsite serving as a "monitor." However, given the hostile reception MPD has received at the skatepark, the idea was rejected. Additionally, the facility is open daily and may require monitoring for months or years to come making it cost-prohibitive. Liability concerns to the town are also an issue given that the facility would be staffed by a town employee and fall into the category of childcare.

After researching skateparks in Concord, San Ramon and Walnut Creek staff has determined that the fencing would fall under three main categories: chain link, ornamental iron and architectural welded iron. Brandt and King recommended the installation of a permanent 6-foot-tall fence, constructed of ornamental iron with two lockable access gates for users to enter and exit the facility. Because the Lamorinda Skatepark is set into a hillside, style options were limited. The proposed fence will compliment the existing 4-foot-tall fence currently situated along the All-Access Playground. It will be set back approximately 30 feet from Moraga Road.

The proposed fence would be locked as needed to control vandalism, safety, compliance issues or during maintenance. Typical closure durations could last between one to three days with signs posted explaining the reason why. It is hoped that these informational postings would encourage well-behaved skatepark users and offenders alike to understand and hold each other accountable for the closures. "Nobody wants a fence," said Brandt, "but everyone's hoping for a solution."

The town council approved the skatepark fence installation with a 3-2 vote, with Council Member Renata Sos and Council Member David Stromberg voting no.

The project is expected to take 90 days to complete at a cost of \$56,490. An appropriation was made by the town council during Fiscal Year 2020-21 Mid-year Budget Adjustments into Fund 750 - Asset Replacement

What began as a great place for skate boarders of all ages to hang out and hone their craft has turned into a headache for the town of Moraga.

Since opening in 2003, through a joint funding effort with Orinda and Lafayette, the facility located in the Moraga Commons Park has seen a steady increase in problems. According to a staff report by Parks and Recreation Director Breyana Brandt and Moraga Police Chief Jon King, "This is largely due to the inability of the town to effectively 'close' and secure the skatepark which is sometimes necessary due to significant occurrences of vandalism, need to complete routine maintenance, inappropriate conduct by users including bullying, fighting, drug use, and failure to obey safety rules and ordinances."

More so within the past year, the town and the County Health Department have received a steady stream of

for the Skatepark Fence Project - pending approval (\$48,000). The Moraga Parks Foundation will donate \$9,000 to help complete the project.

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