

Participating in a Public Hearing on Cardinal City's Skate Park Controversy "Will it be a Radical Ride or a Bogus Bust?"

Overview

Students will assume the roles of various citizens living in the fictitious city of Cardinal, NC and voice their opinions to their local government officials regarding the proposed construction of a skateboarding park in this simulated public hearing. Students will gain an understanding of one of the many ways they can be an informed citizen and participate in their local government's decision-making process.

Grade

8

Course

North Carolina, Creation and Development of the State

North Carolina Standard Course of Study

- Objective 9.01: Describe contemporary political, economic, and social issues at the state and local levels and evaluate their impact on the community.
- Objective 9.03: Describe opportunities for and benefits of civic participation

Materials

- Local Government in North Carolina, Chapter 4 (optional); available online at <http://www.sog.unc.edu/programs/civiced/ncccma/educators/textbook.html>
- Cardinal City News and Observer, attached
- Citizen Roles, attached
- Resource person, such as a City Council or County Commission member; Clerk, City or County Manager; Parks and Recreation official; local skate park owner or employee; etc. * (optional)
 - Contact the person of your choice 2-4 weeks in advance of this activity to explain the activity and ask for assistance in guiding the students in holding a mock public hearing on this issue. After making an initial contact, follow-up with an e-mail including the date, time, location, parking arrangements, and a complete set of materials for the activity. It is highly recommended to invite a resource person to your group. A representative from your local government and/or community can not only provide valuable assistance in this activity, but can also present your group members a chance to interact with and learn from a local government and/or community official.

Essential Questions:

- What authority do public officials possess?
- What are my responsibilities and duties as a citizen?
- What skills are necessary for negotiation, compromise, debate, and consensus?
- What methods exist for citizen input on public policy?
- What do local governments do to inform their citizens?
- What are the basic guidelines for participation in public hearings and public meetings?
- How do the events of my community directly impact local policy?
- What combined factors impact local policy, and how are these factors related?

Duration

60-90 minutes

Procedure

Where Do You Hang & What's Local Government Got to Do With It?

1. Draw a two column "T" chart on the board. As a warm-up, ask students to consider the places in their communities that they go to for fun. List their responses in the first column. After students have listed several places, ask them what their local, state, or federal governments might have to do with each of those places. For an example, if they go to the city park for a basket ball game, that involves local government entities such as the Department of Parks and Recreation, and possibly the County Commissioners or City Council; if they go to a particular restaurant to hang out,

that involves the Health Department, the FDA, etc. Make as many governmental connections for each place as possible, so that students begin to see the connection between government and themselves. (see: <http://www.sog.unc.edu/programs/civiced/ncccma/educators/textbook.html> for assistance in making these connections)

Next, ask students to consider recreational areas that do not exist in their community that they would like to see added. As they discuss, ask them who participates in the decision process regarding such community additions (facilitate discussion of the Department of Parks and Recreation; local governing bodies, such as City Councils and/or the Board of County Commissioners; appointed advisory committees, boards, or commissions (i.e. a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board); and individual citizens and citizen advocacy groups.

Cardinal City's Skate Park Controversy

2. Tell students to pretend that they currently live in Cardinal City, NC. Explain that there is a huge controversy going on in Cardinal, NC right now, involving whether or not a skate boarding park should be built in Cardinal City. Ask students to make some predictions:
 - Why might some community members favor the construction of a skate park?
 - Why might others be against the construction of a skate park?
 - How would you personally feel about a skate park being constructed in our own community?
3. Hand out the attached Cardinal City News and Observer article and give students time to read the background information presented (either individually or in reading partners). Tell them it is important that they understand the situation, since they will be participating in fun activity debating the skate park afterwards. When students have finished reading, discuss:
 - What is the purpose of holding a public hearing? What is the role of a Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (can also be called a board or commission) and why is a public hearing being held by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee in Cardinal City?
 - Facilitate answers such as “so that government officials can hear public opinion; so that the Parks and Recreation Committee can make an educated decision on what recommendation to give to City Council, etc.” You may need to clarify the difference in the local Department of Parks and Recreation and a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. Generally the board is an appointed group of citizens who advise the City Council and the Dept. of Parks and Rec. on matters affecting the overall recreational policies of the Town, the acquisition and use of lands and properties related to the total community recreation program, and its long-range projected programs for recreation, parks, and playgrounds.
 - Why is it important for residents to participate in a public hearing and voice their opinions?
 - What advice would you give a community member who wishes to speak at a hearing or present to local government officials? How can they work to make a good impression and format a convincing argument? (Facilitate answers that focus on developing public speaking skills, having an organized presentation, being educated on the topic, having sufficient preparation, dressing appropriately, etc.)

Preparing for Participation in a Public Hearing

4. Next, hand out a role to students (see the attached “Skate Park Citizen Roles”), explaining they will either be pretending to be a citizen in favor of the skate park’s construction, a citizen opposed to the skate park’s construction, or a member of the undecided Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (the group who will make a recommendation to City Council regarding the skate park’s construction, based largely on what they hear at the hearing). Students should use their own first names with their assigned last name.

The roles are divided in the following three categories:

- Proponents (in favor): Bacon, Stanton, Spofford, Hildago, Thackston, King, Johnson, Edwards, Snipes, Cruise
- Opponents (not in favor): Carson, Jeffries, Dickerson, Baker, Garcia, Smith, Jackson, Sliver, Rich, Norris
- Committee (undecided): Jackson (Chair), Phillips, Chavez, Randolph, Nixon, O’Brien, Alvarez

Teacher Note: If your class has more than 27 students, you might allow more advanced members to create their own role. You can also assign extra students to be Press/Media representatives. These students would float between groups during the planning time and interview Cardinal residents regarding their opinions. The Press/Media Reps would take detailed notes at the hearing and could present a newscast in front of the group once the hearing is over. Likewise, if your group has fewer than 27 members, roles may be omitted.

5. Give students time to study their role individually and gain an understanding of their position on this issue. Encourage



them to begin to make inferences based on their character's personality, beliefs, and reasoning. Explain to them that, before the hearing begins, they will meet in a large group with similarly-minded citizens to strategize a presentation for the skate park hearing. Their goal will be to convince members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to make a recommendation to City Council based on their positions. Simultaneously, members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee will meet to plan this hearing and develop follow-up questions for proponents and opponents.

6. If a resource person is joining your group, introduce him/her at this time and allow him/her to explain their job and how it relates to this activity. Make sure students understand that the visitor will be here to assist them in preparing for the hearing.
7. Review your expectations for group work behavior, and instruct students to meet with likeminded citizens in three different areas of your room. If you have a resource person attending, he/she should float around the room as students prepare, offering advice. If you have more than one resource person, assign them to sit-in with different groups as they work. (Since the class is divided into 3 larger groups, having an adult to monitor each group will result in better productivity.) Project and explain the following Public Hearing schedule so that students know what to expect, and explain the instructions that follow:

- **Public Hearing Format**

- 5 min.-Proponents presentation
- 3 min.-Questions of these speakers by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
- 5 min.-Opponents presentation
- 3 min.-Questions of these speakers by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
- 3 min.- (Optional) Allow opposing citizen groups to discuss among themselves regarding their final statement/rebuttal
- 3 min.-Rebuttal and Summary Statement by Proponents
- 3 min.-Rebuttal and Summary Statement by Opponents
- Open deliberation by Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
- Final decision/vote by Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee on what they will recommend to City Council

Teachers may choose to alter the times as they see fit, but must ensure all sides get equal time to present and answer questions.

- **Instructions for Proponents and Opponent Citizens**

As a group, each of your sides will have 5 minutes to present your views, opinions, and desired outcomes to the the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee. Spend the next 20 minutes determining how to convince the committee to vote according to your beliefs. When you start your strategic meeting, each of you must introduce yourselves as your assigned character and state your views in character. Once everyone has introduced themselves, as a group begin brainstorming how to make your 5 min. presentation to the Parks and Recreation Committee members most effective. Someone should take notes as you brainstorm ideas. You may organize and present your final presentation in any format that you choose (i.e. one spokesperson, several presenters, everyone speaks to the committee, etc.) You may also want to infer what you think the other group's argument will be and prepare to contradict it. (While, for the purposes of this activity, inferring facts, statistics, costs, etc. is fine, your inferences must be realistic. Remember, you will also have a 3 min. rebuttal process to refute the opposite groups ideas, as well as a summarizing statement.

- **Parks and Recreation Committee Members**

As an undecided group, you will have a tough decision in front of you. Ideally, you would find a way to please both sides of this argument, but realistically, that's not going to be easy. When your group's meeting begins, each of you must introduce yourselves as your character and spend the next 20 minutes discussing the pros and cons of both sides of the skate park argument (in character). Also, create a list of questions for each side that you would like to ask in your 3 minute allocation of questioning. At the end of the hearing, you all will be responsible to vote on what your recommendation to City Council will be regarding building the skate park. You should vote based on your character's beliefs and how he/she has been influenced in this process. In the open deliberation, you may discuss as many recommendation options as you choose. Your decision does not necessarily have to be a flat yes or no to the skate parks construction.

Teacher Note: Depending on the students you are working with, you may need to assign one student in the Proponent and Opponent group to be the facilitator in their meeting (the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee already has Jackson assigned as Chair, who should serve as the facilitator). In their assigned character, this student would simply be responsible to keep the introductions, brainstorming, and strategizing



going. Likewise, you may wish to assign one student on each side to be a note taker.

Conducting the Public Hearing Simulation

8. Once groups are finished planning, hold the public hearing (allowing for around 30 minutes). Make sure you discuss behavior expectations for the hearing, such as remaining respectful, not yelling, and most importantly listening to one another. (It will be tempting for the opposing sides to talk amongst themselves based on what they hear. Explain that they will have a moment to regroup later in the process and prepare their rebuttal. Thus, when someone else is speaking, they should be listening.)
9. In political character, the Committee's Chair, Jackson, should call the hearing to order and review its purpose, its format, and the expectations of all those involved. Then, following the process as outlined above, hold the hearing, assisting the student playing Jackson to facilitate the presentations from both sides so that the event is student-lead. When both sides have presented, answered questions, and delivered their rebuttals and closing statements, Jackson should thank all Cardinal City community members for their comments and participation, and lead an open deliberation and discussion of committee members. (Opponents and Proponents can only listen at this time.) In character, the committee should discuss their current feelings on the issue and why they feel this way. Members should attempt to come to a recommendation for the City Council that they can all agree on. Once the recommendation is proposed and voted on, the hearing is over.

Debriefing the Public Hearing Simulation

10. Have the students give a round of applause for all of their hard work, and debrief (teachers can pick and choose which questions to use):
 - What was it like participating in that activity? Would your character like the decision that was made? Do you personally agree or disagree with the board's decision? Explain.
 - Proponents, what was the most effective part of the opponent's presentation and argument? Opponents, what was the most effective part of the proponent's argument? (It is important that the group leader facilitate positive and respectful comments between the opposing groups to ensure everyone leaves feeling successful.)
 - Reflect on the strategy your group chose for presenting your views to the committee. Why did you make the choices you made? In looking back, what do you feel was most effective about your presentation? What would you improve if you did this again?
 - Committee members, was this a difficult process for you to decide? Why or why not? What caused you to feel and vote the way you did? (Encourage Students to be specific in terms of various arguments other Students presented, aspects of their character as assigned, etc.) Did any of your opinions change throughout the hearing? If so, what was it that changed your mind?
 - Were there options that the Committee members did not recognize? Can you think of ways to compromise on this situation more? Facilitate discussion that can include compromises such as:
 - Make the skate park smaller, only using 1-2 acres of the natural land, thus leaving most trails in place, and many hemlock trees protected
 - Build the skating area as far away as possible from the homes bordering Sanctuary Park
 - Do not build the park, allow skaters to skate in defined public places, and remove some of the severed regulations against skate boarding (i.e. the \$300 fine)
 - Search for an alternate skate park site
 - The city can approve the construction of the skate park, but opt to have an independent lessee operate the park. The lessee could be required to have a statement in their insurance policy alleviating the city from any liability.
 - What skills does one need to convince someone of your stance/views?
 - Proponents and opponents, did any of your opinions change based on a point raised by someone of the opposite view? If so, who/what was it that persuaded you? If you were a member of the committee, what would you have decided based on the information presented today?
 - What factors do you think influence actual city and county officials in the decisions they make?
 - What factors influence citizens in the stance they take on public issues (media, propaganda, gossip, etc.)?
 - What would happen if citizens did not make their opinions known on local issues such as the skate park hearing? How might our communities be affected?
 - Even when trying to make the best decision for their community, are policy makers likely to satisfy everyone with that decision? Why or why not?
 - Why is it important to be aware of the decisions our local governments are considering and making?
 - Why is the work of local government officials relevant to each of us as individuals? How are we impacted by such decisions?
 - Can you connect this simulated issue to any local issues in your community? (i.e. Dorthea Dix hospital in Raleigh, construction of a Wal-mart, etc.)



- If the skate park construction were an issue being considered in your own community, what would your opinion be and why? What could you do to express this opinion and make a difference in the decision that is made by officials? Were you to participate in a hearing such as the one we simulated, what would you need to do to prepare?

11. Assign the attached 2007 article, “12-year-old garners support for Wrightsville Beach skate park,” and tell students to read it for homework. Discuss:

- How would you describe Fisher Hardee?
- What actions did Fisher take that classify him as an active, engaged citizen?
- Why is it important for citizens to take action when they want their city or county to make some type of change?

Culminating Activities

- Attend a local hearing, Commissioner’s meeting, or City Council meeting or show students a recording of such a meeting (many local governments televise meetings or offer recordings online)
- Connect this activity to any local land use issue happening in your own community. Get students involved in expressing their opinions on the matter. Make a presentation to your local government on an issue youth choose.
- Write a letter to a government official expressing your opinion regarding a community issue. (See the Consortium’s “How to Write a Letter for Policy Change,” available in the Database of Civic Resources)

Differentiation

Students with special needs

- Allow students to partner with a fellow student leader and share the same role.
- Students who do not work well in groups may work alone. Assign them a role and have them write out what they believe their character would say to the Planning Commission. Students may then have the option of reading their responses to the commission.
- Assign a student(s) the role of “hearing reporter”. While groups are working, the reporter(s) should float between groups and take notes on the various discussions. The student(s) could then deliver a “news cast” to the class at the end of the lesson based on his/her notes.
- Assign a student(s) the role of “hearing stenographer” and create sketches of various stages of the hearing.

Multiple Intelligences Addressed

Linguistic

Logical-mathematical

Body-kinesthetic

Interpersonal

Intrapersonal



Opponent Roles

Carson-Director of the Maple View Estates Home Owners Association

Age 38, married, three children in elementary school

You have lived in Maple View Estates for 5 years and have spent the last two of those years as the Director of the home owners association. Since Maple View Estates borders Sanctuary Park, you worry that the addition of a skate park will negatively impact your community. You feel that residents of Maple View Estates already endure enough noise when baseball games are held at the park, and the addition of a skate park will only create more racket with the banging of boards as kids skate and the loud the music they will play. You are afraid the property value in your neighborhood will go down if the noise becomes more of an issue.



Jeffries-Organizer of Acorn Wood Homes Neighborhood Watch Association

Age 55, no children

You have just been chosen by your community as the leader of the Neighborhood Watch Association in your neighborhood of Acorn Wood Homes. You are strongly opposed to the building of a skate park in Sanctuary Park, since the park borders your subdivision. You feel that the type of clientele a skate park would attract will lead to increased crime in your neighborhood. You do not want skate boarding hoodlums skating through your streets and causing trouble on the way to and from the park.



Dickerson-Founder of "Birds, Bugs, and Beauty," the local nature lovers club

Age 34, married, six children

You are worried about the addition of a skate park in Sanctuary Park, because several acres of the natural area in the park would be destroyed if the park is created. As the founder of "Birds, Bugs, and Beauty," you and your fellow nature loving members have spent a lot of time in the nature section of Sanctuary Park and have noted that it contains several hemlock trees, an endangered species of tree in North Carolina. Further, you worry that the construction of the skate park will disrupt the habitat of various animals and birds which make their home in Sanctuary Park. While you have no problem with kids having a place to skateboard, you do not condone the destruction of nature for this purpose and would rather find an alternate site.



Baker-Stay at home parent

Age 40, married, 1 child

You are strongly opposed to the addition of a skate park anywhere in Cardinal City, or any where at all for that matter. Two years ago, your ten year old injured his spine while skate boarding, and he has been wheelchair bound ever since. You feel that skateboarding is an unsafe, extremely dangerous sport, and you do not believe the town should put its young people in danger. You know that if your son could go back and do things differently, he never would have gotten on a skateboard. Anyone who is in favor of a skate park has no idea what it feels like to experience the destruction skate boarding can cause.



Garcia-City Council member

Age 45, married

You are not in favor of a skate park, mainly because of the liability that the city would face. The park would not bring in enough revenue to cover the expense of the enormous insurance policy the park would require. You are afraid that every time a kid got hurt, parents would sue the city. The park would be more hassle than it is worth.



Jackson-Retired architect

Age 80, widowed

You are one of the three original architects who designed and built the additions to Sanctuary Park in 1965. You feel adding baseball fields, tennis courts, and a playground back then was the right thing to do. However, you do not agree with constructing a skate park in the natural area of Sanctuary Park. You left those 12 acres natural so people would always have a place to go and appreciate nature. To take away part of that area and cover it with pavement and skate ramps would be a tragedy. The area should be protected land, never to be touched by construction.



Silver-Student, Cardinal City Community College

Age 18

You are opposed to the construction of a skate park in Sanctuary Park, mainly because you think the acreage should be used for the construction of a batting cage. You have played baseball since you started with Tee-ball in 2nd grade, and you hope to transfer to a state college next year if you receive a baseball scholarship. You believe that the city should focus on creating a minor league team, which would develop tourism, as well as give you the opportunity to play professional ball in your home town. Skating isn't a sport in your opinion, and a skate park won't benefit anyone in the city except for a few kids. Most everyone on your recreation league team agree with you.

**Rich-Student, West Cardinal High School**

Age 16

You are a member of the West Cardinal High School Cross Country Team, and while you don't have any problem with skate boarders, you do have a problem with the running trails in Sanctuary Park being taken away if the skate park is added. The trails are a great place for you and your team members to train, and you do not think it would be fair to take away the most appealing part of the park. There isn't another area in Cardinal that has defined trails to run on.

**Norris-Reverend of Cardinal United Methodist Church**

Age 67, married, 7 children

You are opposed to the creation of a skate park. Last year, one of the outside walls of your church was vandalized, and you feel sure it was a group of skate boarders who were responsible for the graffiti. A group of skaters had been using your church steps for skating, constantly sliding down the metal banister and using the steps as a jump off platform. Congregation members complained about the damage this was causing, and elderly members particularly felt threatened by the young people rolling around them when they came to Wednesday night services. It took several months to clear the skate boarders out, and directly after that is when graffiti showed up on your outside wall. Since one of the messages was "Skate or Die," you feel sure it was done by the same kids. The local police have not been able to identify the culprit however.

**Smith-Employee for the Center for Disease Control**

Age 36, Single

You do not want to see a skate park put in the natural area of Sanctuary Park, because you feel the running, hiking, and biking trails are more of an asset for the health of your community. In your research on the obesity epidemic plaguing America, you have found that 13% of North Carolina's young people are overweight, and 14% more are in danger of becoming overweight. While skateboarding is an activity, it is not as vigorous and beneficial to controlling weight as running, hiking, or biking.



Proponent Roles

Bacon-Former member of the Cardinal City Planning Commission

Age 78, widowed

You are deeply disturbed that members of City Council and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee are not doing a better job of listening to the needs of young residents in Cardinal. You feel that government officials opposed to the skate park construction are hypocritical when they speak out against drugs and crime among young people, because now they want to forbid an innocent activity that would help keep kids engaged in something active. You think the community should respect the needs of the young people and award them for their civic participation and involvement in local government by approving their park.



Stanton-Developer, No Vertical Limit

Age 29, single

As a developer and builder for the company, "No Vertical Limit," which specializes in extreme sports course and equipment construction, you are excited about the possibility of a skate park being constructed in Sanctuary Park. Your company wants to be in charge of designing and creating this park, and you think your company can offer the most competitive rates around. You also think that skating is a great physical activity for young people and offers a creative alternative for kids who do not enjoy team sports like baseball and football.



Spofford-Freshman at Cardinal City Community College

Age 18

You are a freshman in college and have been an avid skate boarder for the last 10 years of your life. You are currently enrolled in classes at the local community college, but your dream is to get sponsorship as a professional skate boarder and compete on ESPN's X-Games. Having a skate park for practice in your own city would be fantastic, since currently you have to travel 30 miles one way to Chapel Hill's skate park. You also know that skating is not as dangerous as everyone makes it out to be, and Chapel Hill's park has never been sued for any injuries. You do know however that things get pretty loud at the parks, especially when there are contests or skate demonstrations.



Hildago-Employee at the County Health Department

Age 23, 1 child

As an employee at the health department, one of your goals is to get residents of Cardinal City and surrounding areas to live a healthy lifestyle that includes exercise. In a survey you conducted across North Carolina on overweight youth, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the overweight youth polled said they did not exercise regularly. You feel that any addition to the community that encourages young people to be active is a positive step, and you support this construction. You feel that anyone who has seen someone skate board can tell how rigorous of an activity it is. Lot's of calories get burned in a short amount of time.



Thackston - Owner, Thackston's Sporting Goods

Age 50, married, 4 children

As the owner of Cardinal's most popular sporting goods store, you feel that the construction of a skate park in Sanctuary Park would be good for the city's revenue. You plan to carry an extensive line of skate boards and accessories and know that other businesses would be positively impacted as well. You also plan to carry safety gear, as well as have members from the organization "Skate Pass" come and give free skate boarding safety lessons.



King - Retired architect

Age 84, widowed, 2 children

You are one of the three original architects who designed and built the additions to Sanctuary Park in 1965. Arguments were made against the baseball fields and tennis courts back then, and you are disappointed that the same arguments are now being presented against the skate park. Even though many community members opposed the 1965 construction, the addition of a baseball field, tennis courts, and playground made it a better park, and the community still feels its positive impact today. You feel the same would be true of a skate park. Not to mention, you built the park for everyone's enjoyment, and you mean *everyone*. If there is something that can be added to the park to get more people using it and enjoying it, you are all for it.





Snipes-Student, West Cardinal High School

Age 16

You have been skateboarding for 3 years, and you are passionate about having the skate park proposal passed. Skating is your niche and is a way for you to be creative and unique. You feel that its construction would not only be great for you as a skate boarder, but also for your school. Your cousin's co-worker is Tony Hawk's neighbor. You feel pretty sure that if the park gets built, you can contact Tony Hawk, a professional and famous skater, to come and do a demonstration at the park as a fundraiser for your high school.



Johnson-Youth Minister of Cardinal United Methodist Church

Age 25, married, 1 child

While the lead reverend of your church, Reverend Norris, is opposed to the construction of the skate park, you feel it would be a good move for the community. You feel that kids are going to skate board regardless, so it would make sense to give them a safe, structured environment in which they can skate. Otherwise, they will continue to plague places where skate boards are not wanted. A group of local youth had been skating on the front steps of your church, using the step's banister for board slides. While this was chipping the paint and causing damage on the stair rail, the kids were only skating there because there was no where else to go. There is a \$300 fine for anyone caught skating down town, and so kids are constantly turned away and punished for skating. Several of your youth group Students are skaters, and they are good kids who deserve a place to skate and express themselves.



Edwards-Founder, Educate-to-Skate Foundation

Age 31, single

You run an organization called "Educate-To-Skate," which provides skateboards to poor children in Cardinal who cannot afford to buy their own equipment. You believe that skateboarding helps children stay away from negative influences such as drugs and violence and gives them a positive and healthy outlet. You feel that the construction of this park would give kids a safe place to entertain themselves. You would be interested in holding after-school programming at the skate park to get youth off the streets and involved with something constructive.



Cruise-Student, West Cardinal Middle School

Age 14

You have always had a hard time in school and particularly had trouble making friends. You were never really good at organized sports and didn't really have any interests and hobbies. All of that changed when you stepped on your first skate board. Finally, you are good at something. Skating has given you a way to meet lots of friends and raise your self confidence. You feel that sometimes people stereotype skaters and don't respect the sport just because it isn't a team sport like football or baseball. You know that skating takes a lot of diligence, commitment, courage and skill. You can't understand why the committee is against building a park that will help other young people develop these same positive aspects in themselves.



Committee Roles (Undecided)

Jackson-Chair, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Age 48, married, 2 kids

You are the Chair of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and will be in charge of calling the skate park meeting to order. You are responsible to ensure the hearing goes smoothly. It is important that you make sure the entire committee hears all sides of the story. Personally, you don't know much about skate boarding, but you have seen some kids in front of the court house on boards having fun. You think it's amazing that they can do the tricks that they do. However, you also think it looks quite dangerous. You are undecided about the skate park issue and hope that after the hearing, you and the committee will have enough information to make a decision.



Phillips-Committee Member, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Age 45, married, 3 kids

You have mixed feelings about the addition of a skate park to Sanctuary Park. While your two oldest sons are obsessed with skate boarding and really want this park, you wish they would be more involved in baseball, since that's what you played in high school. You know that if you vote against the park, your kids will be incredibly disappointed in you. However, as a resident of Maple View Estates, many members of your Home Owners Association expect you to vote against this proposal. You do not want to anger your kids, but you also don't want to anger your neighbors.



Chavez- Committee Member, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Age 38, single

You remember skate boarding when you were younger, and you loved it. However, while you think skating is a great hobby, you aren't sure there should be an entire park built for this hobby. You are not sure if it would be of financial benefit to the city to build and operate this park. You have considered the fact that building something such as an ice-skating rink or batting cages may bring in more revenue. That said, you do understand that there is no public space where kids can skate, since city council recently passed a law banning skating in public places and has imposed a \$300 for anyone caught skating.



Randolph- Committee Member, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Age 36, married, 3 children

You are undecided regarding the building of a skating area in Sanctuary Park. However, you are incredibly worried about the liability issue the city might face if the park is managed by the Department of Parks and Recreation. You fear the insurance policy required to protect the city from being sued would be to expensive. That said, you have three children, two of whom are adamantly in favor of the park's construction. They spend hours skating each day, and the only way you are able to get your oldest, 14-year-old son to do his homework is to say he must finish it before he can skate.



Nixon- Committee Member, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Age 54, married

You are undecided regarding the building of a skate park in Sanctuary Park. Right now, you have people on both sides of the argument hoping to sway your vote, and these are people to whom you will have to answer. You are deeply religious and are a member of Reverend Norris' congregation at Cardinal United Methodist Church. The Reverend has spoken out in several church meetings about the vandalism skate boarders have caused to his property. He expects you to vote in opposition to the park's construction. On the other side, your cousin is the founder of a local charity organization, "Educate to Skate." You know that the organization has done some amazing things with impoverished youth by giving them skate boards, lessons, and a safe group to hang out with after school. Your cousin will be disappointed if you do not vote to build the park.



O'Brien- Committee Member, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

While you are officially undecided about the construction of a skate park in Cardinal City, you are admittedly leaning towards the attitude that it is a bad idea. You aren't convinced that it would be used by the entire community, since most skate boarders are younger and male. You can't imagine the middle-aged and elderly residents of Cardinal getting anything out of the construction of this park. Not to mention the fact that the park's noise will certainly affect neighboring communities. However, you do think that the 12 acres is somewhat wasted space, and all of it doesn't need to be natural. You think building something on some of that acreage of it isn't a bad idea, you just aren't convinced of what exactly should be built.

**Alvarez- Committee Member, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee**

Age 49, married, 3 children

While you are officially undecided about the construction of a skate park in Cardinal City, you are admittedly a "kid at heart" and feel the committee should respect the wishes of the youth in the community. However, figuring out what is best given all opinions is difficult. In your own household, you have three children, one of whom is obsessed with skate boarding, the other of whom is obsessed with baseball, and the last of whom loves running cross country and hopes to continue with this in college. Each of them has different ideas of what should be done in Sanctuary Park, and you are unsure how to please them as well as the community at large.



CARDINAL CITY NEWS AND OBSERVER

SANCTUARY PARK SKATING CONTROVERSY: WILL IT BE A RADICAL RIDE OR A BOGUS BUST?

Cardinal City -

Tension continues to mount over whether or not developers will be able to build a 5 acre skating area within Cardinal City's Sanctuary Park.

The 20-acre park was donated to Cardinal City in 1945 and was used as a nature park for 20 years. In 1965, the city approved the addition of a baseball field, three tennis courts, and a playground area on 8 acres of the land. Over time, various paths have been created throughout the remaining 12 acres of natural area for hiking, running, and biking.

The proposed skate park would contain several ramps, a free style area, and various platforms, ledges, and rails for skaters to use. Its construction would lead to the elimination of several acres of woods.

Sanctuary Park is bordered on two sides by the residential neighborhoods of Maple View Estates and Acorn Wood Homes. Some of these residents believe that the addition of a skate park would lead to increased crime and vandalism.

"I just don't think it's good for safety in general. It's a dangerous hobby, and a lot of those young kids will come skating over to my street, vandalizing things and causing trouble," commented Maple View Estates resident Mary Easterling.

Many local youth and youth advocates disagree. "We don't have anywhere else to skate right now because of all the city ordinances. There is an unfair \$300 fine if we skate downtown. A skate park will give skateboarders a safe place to practice our sport, and this way we won't be in other areas where people don't want us," commented 16-year-old skate boarder Jessie Vander.

Stan Cooper, the President of "No Vertical Limit," a company specializing in building extreme sports course equipment, agrees the park would be a good addition to the community.

"We have built many parks across North Carolina thus far, and each park has been successful in providing a safer place for skaters to practice their sport and show their individuality," commented Cooper.

Other residents are most concerned about losing more of the natural area that the park contains, since the proposed skateboarding area would take up around 5 acres.

Members from the local nature club "Birds, Bugs and Beauty" have noted several endangered hemlock trees growing in the area, and also fear many animals will be negatively impacted if their natural habitat is altered.

"We have no issue with skateboarding," commented club member Sal Rogers. "We just don't want to see one of the most beautiful areas left in Cardinal City torn up and covered with concrete, pavement, and steel ramps. Just think of the poor birds."

Concerned citizens will be able to voice their opinions on this issue at the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting, this Wednesday at 6:00 PM. The committee will be responsible for making a recommendation to city council in the upcoming month.

"This public hearing will be about receiving comments on the possible addition of this skateboarding park as it relates to public safety and the common good of our community," Chairman Jackson reported.

All those who wish to speak will need to arrive at 5:30 and sign up before the meeting starts.

Facts to consider:

According to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, skateboarding results in about 50,000 visits to the emergency room every year. About 1,500 of those visits result in hospitalization. Common injuries include wrist fractures, broken noses, busted jaws and, in more severe instances, concussions.

Skate parks require protective gear, such as a helmet, and offer a safer place for young people to skate.

Project 58 Skate Park located in Raleigh, NC had about 25,000 paid skate sessions last year, which resulted in less than 30 broken bones.

12-year-old garners support for Wrightsville Beach skate park

by Jennifer Roush

Thursday, August 16, 2007

Twelve-year-old Fisher Hardee has a vision. And it's one many local residents have — to build a skate park in Wrightsville Beach.

He started going door to door with a petition he made before finding it more productive to receive the help of area businesses: Surf City Surf Shop, Sweetwater Surf Shop and Café Del Mar, where he is keeping petitions. He plans to take all his signatures to the Aug. 23 Wrightsville Beach Board of Aldermen meeting and the Sept. 10 Wrightsville Beach Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting.

A skateboarder since his seventh birthday, Hardee finds limited places to skate in the area and finds it difficult to make it to the new Carolina Beach skate park.

"When I want to go to a skate park, most of the time I can't because it's too far for my parents to drive," he said. "I'd just like to have a skate park near here and come back to my house as I please."

Since skateboarding is prohibited in most places in the community, Hardee and his friends have ramps and quarter- and half-pipes at their houses.

"It's harder because it's a smaller area (Wrightsville Beach)," he said. "And surfing is more popular down here. There's not that many places to skate at all."

Beverly Hardee of the South Harbor Island area thought that she would let her son go with the idea, which she thought would fizzle out. Instead, Fisher has taken off with it.

"He got interested in it because (recently) he wanted me to take him to Carolina Beach to the skate park," she said. "I said, 'No, I'm not taking you all the way down there.' He said, 'If Carolina Beach can get one, Wrightsville Beach can get one.' ... I've let him run with it. He printed out the petition he made himself."

Lisa Weeks, president of the Parks and Recreation Foundation, which is a private entity spun off of the municipal advisory committee, said her board is going to make a presentation to the board of aldermen on Aug. 23 regarding the long-term master plan for the needs of Wrightsville Beach. And one of the top 10 issues is a skateboarding facility.

"One thing the residents say they wanted to see (when surveyed) was a skate park facility that allows them to go somewhere other than the tennis courts or parking lots or driveways to skateboard," she said. "So that was a pretty high number of surveys (with) residents indicating that's something they want to see in some capacity. ... I think the residents would like to see something done."

Ted Lashley, parks and recreation director at Carolina Beach, said their liability concerns about building a skate park were put to rest when Senate Bill 774 passed in the North Carolina General Assembly. Two months ago, the fenced-in, concrete skate park was built in Carolina Beach for \$176,000. As long as they posted proper signage about protective gear and being an unsupervised park and enacted a town ordinance according to specifications, the bill states the town faces limited liability.