

M-NCPPC



## MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL  
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

9500 Brunett Avenue  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20901

Agenda Item 9  
MCPB 3/14  
March 4, 2002

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Don Cochran, *DC* Director of Parks  
Mike Riley, Acting Division Chief, Park Development *M*  
John Hench, *JH* Natural Resources Supervisor  
Doug Alexander, *DA* Supervisor, Project Management & Design Section

FROM: Ellen Masciocchi, *EM* Project Coordinator, Park Development  
Tanya Schmieler, *TS* Planning Supervisor, Countywide Planning

RE: Proposed local skateboard facility at Takoma Piney Branch Local Park

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The City of Takoma Park requests a lease to convert two tennis courts at Takoma Piney Branch Local Park for the purpose of placing skateboard elements on the tennis courts and operating a skateboard facility. Staff recommends approval subject to the following conditions:

- The City of Takoma Park's grant administrator will prepare a grant application in coordination with M-NCPPC staff, for a Maryland Community Parks and Playground grant to fund the construction of the skateboard facility elements on the tennis courts and additional needed fencing. M-NCPPC would submit a letter voicing support for the project.
- Takoma Park will hold the M-NCPPC harmless from liability.
- The City will adequately construct, supervise, operate and maintain the skateboard facility elements and equipment.
- M-NCPPC maintenance responsibility for the skateboard facility will be limited to renovation of the surface and fencing of the skateboard area.
- Financial assistance will be available for those youth unable to pay admission.
- The facility will be operated as a non-profit, primarily walk-to facility.

- The fee schedule must be reviewed by M-NCPPC and incorporated into the lease agreement.
- Final plans for the skateboard facility will be subject to Park staff review and permits including Park Police CPTED safety principles.

## **Discussion**

The 17.4 acre Takoma Piney Branch Local Park is located adjacent to Grant and Darwin Avenues. It is in close proximity to two elementary and one middle school. The park currently consists of two tennis courts, a basketball court, playground, shelter, fitness course, multi-use court and parking lot as well as a combination softball/soccer field, and softball practice area. The tennis courts and partial fencing around them are in good condition. (Attachment A – Existing Park Map, Attachment B – Vicinity Map)

The Commission received a letter and resolution passed by the City Council on February 1, 2002, indicating their interest in developing a skateboard facility on the two tennis courts in Takoma Piney Branch Local Park. The City would need to enter into a lease with the M-NCPPC before it would apply for a Maryland Community Parks and Playground Grant to fund the construction of the skateboard facility. This item is requesting Planning Board agreement on this proposal. (Attachment C).

At the January 28, 2002 Takoma Park City Council public hearing, over 40 youths and parents testified in favor of the proposal. There was some community opposition from tennis players to using the two tennis courts in the park for a skateboard facility. After hearing substantial testimony from skateboarders and some tennis players, the Council decided to pass a resolution that would agree to the idea of pursuing a skateboard facility, but attempt to balance the need for tennis courts in the park. The City of Takoma Park does not have any tennis courts under its jurisdiction. There are tennis courts at 4 other M-NCPPC parks within a 2 mile radius. The parks with courts are Sligo Avenue and Silver Spring Intermediate Neighborhood Parks, Jesup Blair Local Park and Sligo Stream Valley Park Unit 1. Park staff assessed the condition and usage of all of these courts. They are all in good condition and greatly underutilized (Attachment D). Park staff explored the possibility of refurbishing the tennis courts at Takoma Park Middle School, which is adjacent to the park. There are a total of four courts at this location. Three courts are available, however there are cracks in them and no nets. The fourth court has two portable classrooms on it. MCPS staff has tentative plans to renovate the courts this summer and are currently determining whether there are sufficient funds (\$100,000) in the school system budget to refurbish the courts.

The City plans to construct, staff, operate and maintain the skateboard facility. There is a high interest among the youth of Takoma Park in skateboarding. The Commission is supportive of developing skateboarding

facilities as referenced in our recent study, "Roller Hockey, In-line Skating and Skateboarding Report". The Report highlights the need to locate a skateboard facility in the Silver Spring area. The staff envisions the skateboard facility in Takoma Piney Branch Local Park as a neighborhood facility. It would augment the regional skateboard park currently planned for the Fenton Gateway Park (Attachment E). The City of Rockville successfully constructed a skateboard facility on two existing tennis courts. Attachment F includes photographs of the Rockville facility.

#### Community Outreach and Coordination

City staff met with a group of young people from the community and again with the Hodges Civic Association. Park staff attended a City Council work session and public hearing. This project has been coordinated with Community based planning, Countywide Planning, the Park Manager, Natural Resources, and the Director of Recreation for the City of Takoma Park. This project has been coordinated with a staff management/renovation plan for the Park, which the Board has received in their boxes. The project was taken through Plan Review on February 11<sup>th</sup>.

The Chief of the Takoma Park police testified in favor of the project at the public hearing. He was concerned with the safety of the young people who currently skateboard on the Takoma Park streets because they have no place to go.

#### Discussion of Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the City's request to operate a skateboard facility on park property subject to the conditions listed at the front of this memorandum. Whereas the City will maintain the skateboard equipment and elements, the City requested M-NCPPC to participate in the maintenance of the surfacing and fencing. Staff concurs that the Commission's obligation for capital improvements for renovation of the court surface and fencing is appropriate as it is consistent with PLAR renovation policies.

M-NCPPC staff will coordinate with the City during the grant application process. If the City is unsuccessful in obtaining a Maryland Parks and Playgrounds Grant, other funding options could be examined. If M-NCPPC funding were requested in the future for a portion of the facility, staff would come back to the Board for further discussion.

**Attachments:**

- A. Park Property Map**
- B. Vicinity map of the park**
- C. Letter and Resolution from City of Takoma Park**
- D. Letter to Debra Haiduven, Director of Recreation, City of Takoma**
- E. Memorandum from Community-based Planning**
- F. Photographs of City of Rockville Skateboard facility**