

Amity skatepark lacks funds but not support

Published: Thursday, November 26, 2009

By Denise Larive, Journal Register News Service

AMITY — It may need volunteers and improvements, but the skateboard park at Lake Drive Park has plenty of support to remain.

Township police and Crime Watch members said on Nov. 19 that they want the skateboard park to stay open and be improved with new funds.

Resident Brent S. Frampton, a key player in the creation of the skateboard park that opened in 2006, said he needs volunteers and park supporters to start a new phase in the park's clean up that would make it more family-friendly. The park's creation in 2005 was supported by 350 signatures on a petition.

"My big job is to deal with the facts," said Amity Police Chief Kent A. Shuebrook, who started the discussion at the Nov. 19 Amity Township Crime Watch Meeting. He was referring to recent negative press that the park was in jeopardy of closing.

"We have had 15 reports of violence in the area of the skateboard park within the last 11 months," said Shuebrook. "It doesn't mean it had anything to do with teenagers. Let's not blame all the kids that hang out there. Let's not create a mountain out of a molehill that the park is in jeopardy of being closed.

"That is probably not the best location for a skateboarrd park - 50 to 100 feet away from a children's playground and park," said Shuebrook.

"And yes, there are problems and issues. There have been two arrests for drug offenses. There are probably more drugs at the Daniel Boone Middle School than down there [at the skateboard park] in the whole year.

"Let's deal in true facts and not rumors. It doesn't help to solve the issues of what we need to fix. I think the kids are basically good. Yes, they do dumb things. If there was an adult presence once in a while, we'd send the small percentage of miscreants on their way," Shuebrook said.

Frampton's Skateboard Park Committee was instrumental in raising

tunds in 2003 and creating the skateboard park with Sen. John Karrerty (R-44), and Amity Township officials in 2005. Frampton had helped secure the beginner to advanced skateboard equipment from Skatewave Modular Systems, Delano, MN.

The equipment could also be expanded.

"This man put his heart and soul into putting the park together," said Amity police officer Thomas Gauby.

"He had a committee once but kids grow up and parents stop participating. His kids are out on their own but he'd like to see the park continue. I'd like to see it continue, and the police department wants to see it continue. It's a good thing. We want to see the kids enjoy it. I'd love to see it take off again, but need to find those kids and parents.

"It was a fad, but the kids had nowhere else to go," said Frampton of the Skateboard Park Committee.

"Merritt's Antiques, Weavertown Road, had a deck and police would chase the kids away."

"My other two board members on the committee have left and I can't do it alone," said Frampton.

"The kids are using the park, but if it isn't maintained, the equipment won't be safe to use. Increase taxes \$200 a year? I don't think so. Maybe an annual competition with prizes? We need more parents to be involved," he said.

One parent, Mark Militano, said Bentley Boards, of Pottstown, is interested in being a sponsor at an annual competition to raise funds. Militano's 16-year-old son, Matthew, skateboards with the store's Bentley Team and started skating at Amity Skateboard Park.

Frampton's survey on www.amityskatepark.homestead.com indicates that 37 percent (238) of the kids want a mini half pipe installed at the park. Other elements they expressed interest in seeing in the park were a pyramid, bench, stairs, launch ramp, bank, and spine that together received 397 votes.

"Funding could also get improved lighting and a security camera," said Frampton. "The annual competition could be a fun, family time and it could be a real valuable area to do things with the playground there. I'm glad to meet with people and try to get this thing moving."

"We want the kids to enjoy the skateboard park," said Gauby. "People

...the main idea was to enjoy the entertainment park, said Smolinsky. People don't need to be afraid to call us about things going on there. There could have been 45 things going on there and we don't know about it if it's not reported."

Crime Watch Secretary Susan Smolinsky said a mother commented to her four years ago that Crime Watch is out there to "get those kids and get them in trouble."

Smolinsky said that comment was far from the truth.

"We're down there to keep the kids safe and deter crime. We're not out there to get the kids. Crime Watch is about the kids. We're not against the kids," she said.