



Published on SavannahNow.com (<http://savannahnow.com>)

Tybee Council drops skatepark funding

By Scott M. Larson
Created 2008-02-29 00:30

With supporters crying politics, the Tybee Island City Council on Thursday night eliminated \$60,000 for a skate park from the city's 2008 budget.

The fight between park supporters and its opponents was a signature issue in the 2007 election, and opponents have won this latest round. The next round will come when the council is confronted with approving a master plan for Memorial Park with a skate park in it.

Council members also voted, 5-1, to rescind any previous approvals to build a skate park on city property. Councilman Paul Wolff was the lone dissenter.

The park was removed as part of a slate of budget amendments, which some council members wanted to adopt to tackle the city's \$25 million in debt. One of the amendments adds \$464,000 to pay off debt this year.

Other changes include \$220,000 for infrastructure and an unexpected \$405,000 in sales tax revenue to fund fire department equipment, business district renovations and new Fort Screven water lines.

Mayor Jason Buelterman, a staunch supporter of a skate park, urged five council members supported by park opponents to fund a feasibility study for a park. He predicted the study would come back in favor of a park.

But Larry Nesbitt, president of the Tybee Island Residents and Property Owners Association, sat in the crowd shaking his head no.

The association was the biggest opponent to a skate park.

Libby Bacon, who pushed for the park, said the association politicized the issue.

"Well, this budget amendment looks, smells, tastes and feels political," she said.

She noted the association did not want a skate park on Tybee to be built with either public or private money.

Nesbitt took issue with that.

"At no time has TIRPOA ever objected to a skate board park being privately built," Newbitt said.

But the record shows that isn't accurate.

In late 2006 when the issue was hottest, property owners association members said they did not want a skate park anywhere on the island because it was too hard to buffer from neighborhoods. They even contacted Chatham County officials in an effort to find a site somewhere off the island.

"The citizens were very vocal," Nesbitt's wife, Bonnie, told the council in December 2006. "They are overwhelmingly - the vast majority - opposed to a skate park on Tybee, any place at any cost."

In the end, the budget amendments were approved unanimously. Wolff, the only council member the property owners association did not support, backed Buelterman's idea of a feasibility study.

Councilman Eddie Crone said he doesn't support a skate park being built on any city property.

Councilman Charlie Brewer said Memorial Park isn't an appropriate place.

Source URL:

<http://savannahnow.com/node/455563>