

MIDDLETOWN

Supervisors approve new equipment for skate park

The money to fund the additions will come from impact fees paid by developers.

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By CHRIS ENGLISH STAFF WRITER

Taking a break from their gliding and grinding, skateboarders Steve Eshewsky, Tyler Hillerman and Ryan Kelly greeted the news of two new pieces of equipment for the McCafferty-Middletown Skate Park with yelps of joy.

The township supervisors recently approved purchasing stairs with planter and a pole jam for the park at a combined cost of almost \$30,000. Parks and Recreation director Debby Lamanna hopes they can be installed sometime this summer.

You'd have thought Steve, Tyler and Ryan, all from Middletown, had just hit the lottery. "Oh my God, stairs, finally," gasped Tyler, 13. "That's awesome, I can't wait," added Steve, 14. To skateboarders, stairs are gold, explained the 14-year-old Ryan. "Most skate parks are mostly ramps, and they're good, but you want variety," he said. "When we aren't skating at parks, when we're just out and around, we're usually looking for someplace with stairs," Steve added.

Middletown teenager Michael Brown, riding his bicycle while the others skateboarded at the park, said he'd also like to give the stairs a try once they're installed.

The skate park allows bikes during times when park employees believe the bikers won't collide with the skateboarders, Lamanna said.

She said money for the two new pieces of equipment is coming from the park and recreation capital budget funded by impact fees from developers. Routine operational expenses at the skate park, like salaries for the part-time employees, are covered by fees paid by users of the park, Lamanna said.

To make room for the new equipment, a picnic table and grind rail — two of the least popular pieces — will be removed, she said.

Lamanna said the replica concrete planter on the stairs gives it a city or street atmosphere, something skateboarders like. The pole jam is a piece of equipment resembling a bent-over pole that skateboarders like to grind on, she said.

In skateboarder parlance, grinding is riding along a piece of equipment on the skateboard surface without using the wheels, Lamanna said.

The McCafferty-Middletown Skate Park is open to people from all municipalities, though fees for non-township residents are higher. This year, the daily fee is \$5 for residents and \$10 for non-residents, and a season pass \$50 for residents and \$100 for non-residents. McCafferty is in the name of the skate park because the McCafferty Auto Group in Middletown donated \$100,000 toward its construction.

The skate park, located inside the Middletown Community Park on Langhorne-Yardley Road, opened six years ago and continues to be well used, said Lamanna. Last year, the number of people using it at least once was 819, up from 609 in 2006 and 554 in 2005. Last year, revenue at the skate park was \$13,512 and routine operational expenses \$13,452.

Among surrounding municipalities, Bensalem has a skate park and Falls officials plan to build one at the township community park.

In Bristol Township, Bucks County officials said they would be willing to set aside land for a skate park at the county government complex near the Five Points intersection but they haven't made any commitment to help with construction. Later this year, Bristol Township officials said they will send out a survey to gauge interest in a skate park among residents.

There's also been talk among Newtown Township officials and residents about a skate park there, but plans have not progressed very far.

For more information on the McCafferty-Middletown Skate Park, call the township parks and recreation department at 215-750-3890.