

## Cape Girardeau Parks and Recreation Proposes a Skate Park

By Kayla Gaffney

At the city council meeting on March 2nd, Cape Girardeau Parks and Recreation made a proposal to the council regarding the funding of a new skatepark for the city of Cape Girardeau.

According to Parks and Recreation director Julia Thompson, the idea for a new skate park is not a new one. It all started years ago when the city was looking at the passage of a parks and stormwater tax. The city compiled a list of park amenities that citizens would be interested in supporting, including a skatepark.

Thompson says the skatepark was one of the things on the list that didn't make the final cut. "All the needs came in front of the city council and they determined that there wouldn't be a large enough budget to cover, the skate park was one of the first items that were cut from the project list," Thompson said.

According to Thompson, the estimated cost for the skatepark is 300,000 dollars.

Chris Hutson, manager of Hutson Furniture in downtown Cape Girardeau, has been leading the effort in support of the skatepark and has been doing his best to raise money for it.

According to Thompson, the presentation at the meeting was aimed at making the city council aware of the cost of the project, the need for funding, and Hudson's dedication to it.

Thompson said, "Our presentation included making sure that the city council recognized that there was a citizen that was really working hard in this area to help raise funds and Chris's main ask was, can the city support any additional funding for the skate park and so I think that's what the city council is considering."

When asked why he wanted to be apart of the project, Hutson says he used to skate when he was younger and continues to do it with his family.

"When I had kids, when we would travel, we would hit all these skateparks and we started skating and had a lot of fun. We just thought it was a great family deal, it was very good for our family, something we could all do together," Hutson said.

According to Hutson, the project has been approved but isn't being funded by the city. He has currently raised 43,000 dollars and has no plans to stop raising money for the project. "Talking to people, service organizations and private people to raise money to get it going faster. It's going to happen it's just the question of when," Hutson said.

Hutson says many things for the skatepark have already been decided on. "We have the land, we have the environmental studies done on the land. We have engineering to look at the land to see how the park will lay on it, we have the design and layout."

The skatepark will be used for rollerblading, skating, and bicycling and would include restrooms, drinking fountains, and a parking lot. It will be located in the center of town in Arena Park, which Thompson says will be more accessible and will give teens something to do outdoors.

"That particular age group that typically is in to skateboarding, they often find that there's not a lot to do for that age group so this would really appeal to that age group. Just the whole aspect of staying outside and getting away from your electronic devices and doing some great exercise out on the trail or in the skateboard park I think would be a great health benefit as well," Thompson said.

The city council will review the project and determine where potential funding could come from and how to proceed.