

Selah City Council
Selah School Board
Study Session
September 12, 2006

Study Session

Mayor Jones opened the Study Session at 5:12pm.

Those in attendance were as follows:

Council Members Keith Larson, Denise Nichols, Paul Overby, Allen Schmid,
Scott Smeback

Mayor Bob Jones, City Supervisor Frank Sweet, Parks and Recreation Director
Jeff Hagler, Teen Center Supervisor Jason Brink, Americorps worker Kim Speer

School Board Members Ann Washut, Todd Trepanier, Leanne Liddicoat, Jim
Sebree

Superintendent Larry Parsons, Principal Chad Quigley

Selah C.A.N. representatives Donna Garner, Rex Van Beek

Mayor Jones stated this Study Session is an extension of a meeting begun two months ago regarding the Teen Center and the skate park. He asked if work is complete on the Teen Center.

Donna Garner responded that they are doing the bathrooms, but the rest is in use right now.

Frank Sweet stated the committee got together to come up with some alternatives and to bring back alternatives to the whole group and decide where to go from here.

Jeff Hagler directed attention to a map, noting the committee has looked at a number of sites.

Larry Parsons reminded the group that no one is talking about putting the Teen Center and skate park at the same site.

Jeff Hagler stated they've looked at several different sites for a skate board park. He stated he's enjoyed working with school district at the current site and noted from the beginning the site was temporary (for only two years). He stated everyone agrees it would be beneficial to situate the skate park in a very visible location. He stated the committee looked at City property that might work as a site; they looked at City property at the bottom of Crusher Canyon. He also pointed out Legion Park at the intersection of Fremont and Speyers as a possible site.

Mayor Jones stated the Teen Center is very valuable, but he has reservations about the skate park. He stated the Parks Department has 756 kids enrolled for soccer, making that the most critical recreation need the City has right now. He stated we've had some bad experiences with graffiti, attitude, garbage, and language, and that he's not inclined to go the mile for the skateboarders. He asked if they've marked up the area where they are, what are they going to do to Lince Elementary?

Mr. Hagler stated they are making progress at the current site, hiring Jason Brink as a Teen Center Supervisor. He said the graffiti problem has lessened, but the garbage goes up and down.

Councilman Paul Overby asked what is it about Selah, are kids worse here?

Councilwoman Denise Nichols responded that the Yakima Skate Park needs constant care.

Mayor Jones stated he believes it is a "grunge mindset."

Jeff Hagler stated four new pieces of equipment for the Skate Park will arrive tomorrow.

Larry Parsons stated there is no sense of urgency about moving the Teen Center, but there is one in regard to the skate park.

Councilman Allen Schmid stated these are two separate situations. The Teen Center requires a longer term plan, and we want to get it into a permanent facility which is accessible and has adequate parking. He suggested this could fit the triangle area off Wernex Drive and First Street, which has adequate space for a Teen Center and parking. It also has potential to provide office space for Parks & Recreation, perhaps a "Butler Building." He stated he has been down at the Teen Center a lot. He noted there are lots of good kids who are skateboarders, but we have a few kids who create a problem. He said he would put the skateboard park at the Lince location and suggested an eight-foot chain-link fence should be put around it and locked up at night.

Ann Washut stated lots of citizens would be upset if the skate park were put at Lince.

Frank Sweet stated his perception is that the School Board is absolutely opposed to having the Skate Park at Lince, and asked if they would prefer to leave it where it is.

Board Member Leanne Liddicoat responded that it should not be close to the high school; the dilemma is where to put it.

Councilwoman Nichols asked if the committee has a recommendation for the group.

Donna Garner said the recommendations from the committee are to put it either by Lince or at Sunrise Park. She spoke to the pros and cons of various properties.

Paul Overby stated these properties received primary consideration because the City already owns the land. He further stated our problem continues to be the issue of not

putting it next to a school. He noted it is very difficult to find open space in Selah that is not close to a school.

Ann Washut asked if the City's North Wenas property might be considered.

The City Supervisor noted that area is prime commercial property part of which is owned by Otis Harlan, who would have little interest in a skate park.

Donna Garner suggested a bathroom would need to be built at the Lince site. She stated she and Mr. Hagler also discussed the possibility of Sunrise Park. Jeff Hagler said Sunrise Park is right across from Wernex Loop on First Street. Mrs. Garner noted it is in full view of the public street and easily accessible from the high school and junior high as well as the Teen Center. Councilwoman Nichols pointed out that the property is not flat. Mrs. Garner stated it is big enough that a Skate Park site could be flattened out.

Ann Washut stated the site is too close to the elementary school.

Chad Quigley stated he thinks that site is unacceptable. He further stated that he doesn't care where you put it, there will continue to be problems with the "anarchy culture" of the skate boarders. He asked if the community really supports building a Skate Park.

Paul Overby stated containment is an issue for the community; they want to focus the skaters' activities to a single area rather than in all the parking lots around town. He stated nobody wants to award bad behavior.

Mayor Jones insisted that skateboarders have to demonstrate that they can be good citizens before anybody is going to be willing to build a park. He said he doesn't know of a place in town that would be a safe place. He stated until the City solves the problem with soccer, he won't be willing to consider building anything new. He said whatever we do there's going to be a problem.

Frank Sweet stated the skate park contract extends to April, and suggested the City can use the additional staffing at the current skate park as a test. He said if we pull the plug then, we'll still have to do something with it.

Councilman Overby stated Yakima's skate park location is the best analogy to putting it by Lince.

Denise Nichols stated it comes down to the issue of whether this community wants to have a facility or not. She said if we do, then we must discuss a location.

Mayor Jones asked where do you put your emphasis - on the 800 kids playing soccer or on 40 skateboarders?

Councilman Overby stated there are lots of skateboarders, just watch the kids coming out of the high school.

Donna Garner interjected that these kids do not have support of parents and coaches.

Mayor Jones asserted he has always supported youth programs.

Donna Garner and Mayor Jones entered into a debate.

Councilman Overby stated if we don't deal with this issue, it will come back to haunt us.

Mayor Jones said he has received no calls reporting any ringleaders.

Councilman Smeback asked the committee if they looked at any private property such as the Brown & Cole property. He suggested that area seems ideal.

Councilwoman Nichols asked if there is room at Carlon Park. She noted the Yakima Skate Park is contiguous to a premier soccer complex.

Todd Trepanier stated we have to look out for all of our interests; a skateboard park is not compatible with Lince. He stated the current situation has not worked out well, and just because skateboarders act well by the Teen Center doesn't mean they would act well when they are not next to the Teen Center.

Ann Washut stated she would prefer the Lince site over Sunrise Park. She stated elementary school kids play right up to the fence.

Todd Trepanier stated his concern about entrance to Junior High being compromised by using the Wernex Loop for a Teen Center.

Mayor Jones stated he wants to keep Selah clean and nice and does not like to be extorted.

Keith Larson stated Donna Garner brings up a good point about lack of supervision of skateboarders compared to organized sports. He noted we're not coming up with a solution.

Allen Schmid said he thinks we have made some big inroads with the skateboarders at the current site. There are two to four kids who are creating the problem. The rest are not going to "rat" or "snitch." He said we're getting close to knowing who's creating the problems.

Todd Trepanier stated that is happening because of your interest, and that would need to continue.

Jim Sebree said if April comes, and we take a dozer to the concrete, what do we do then? Where are they going to go? He stated there has to be something in place by that time.

Mayor Jones switched the topic to the Teen Center, asking the Superintendent about the use of portable classrooms.

Larry Parsons stated the portables behind the Teen Center are only partially in use, but one might be made available.

Councilman Schmid asked if anyone has looked at the little piece of ground alongside of the tennis courts. He stated he's looking at visibility - fences on two or three sides of it. He noted baseball kids are bigger than skateboarders.

Ann Washut stated the skateboarders don't seem to be intimidated by anybody.

Chad Quigley said it's part of the culture "rules don't apply to me." He stated these kids don't even want to be civil.

Councilman Schmid stated the spot behind Woods Field and by the tennis courts is far enough away from schools, yet close enough to rest rooms.

Mayor Jones stated 10-15 guys built McGonagle Field, and then came to the City wanting water. He stated they bought and paid for their facility. He said he feels now the City is being extorted.

Allen Schmid said skateboard parents are a different group of people who may not have the ability to fund a facility, unlike the Little League parents.

Denise Nichols asked if the committee could consider this further.

Frank Sweet stated that makes some sense, and we should find an adult in the boarding group who will step forward. He suggested the skateboarders themselves need to be involved in the process. He stated the goal should be to have something in place by April.

Mayor Jones suggested community people should also be contacted.

Ann Washut suggested closing the park at specific times.

Paul Overby noted none of these locations are perfect, and money continues to be a problem.

Donna Garner asked if the City and School would swap property.

Denise Nichols asked if the Teen Center problems have been resolved.

Larry Parsons stated right now the school is satisfied and grateful for the help of Donna and others.

Jason Brink said all these kids aren't bad kids; they come from a variety of backgrounds. A few dedicated ones pick up garbage every day. He said the only problem inside is broken tips on pool cues. They're not allowed to smoke at the Teen Center, but some go up to the church and smoke there.

Kim Speer stated skateboarders behave sort of like a family, helping and teaching each other.

Keith Larson stated Jason Brink is right, the skateboarders need supervision just like the kids at the Teen Center do.

Rex Van Beek stated his appreciation for the conversation and the dilemma. We can't allow ourselves as a community to identify a group of kids as not belonging or not counting as much as a baseball player or soccer player. We can't allow ourselves to say there is a segment of our population who are disposable and, because they behave badly, we are not going to value them. From a pastor's prospective, from a community perspective, we can't afford to do that. We need to help these children overcome these issues and to become accountable adults. We need to nurture kids.

Kim Speer stated the kids need adults to be there.

Jason Brink urged adults to give them a reason rather than a reprimand. He used the example of kids who like to draw making pictures for the Teen Center.

Mayor Jones stated he is pro-youth, but gets frustrated with destruction of property. He used the example of bleachers being destroyed.

Kim Speer suggested having kids raise money for the Skate Park. She noted their involvement is very important.

Ann Washut suggested emphasizing that everyone needs to follow rules.

Donna Garner told of going down to the Skate Park early one morning, and noticing kids sleeping in trailer.

Jim Sebree emphasized the importance of parental involvement in building a BMX club park at Ahtanum Park.

At 6:33 pm Mayor Jones thanked all for their participation and moved back into regular Council Meeting.