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W-B City Council

April 25

Officials will hear more on proposed skate park

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WILKES-BARRE – City council Thursday agreed to work with advocates of a skateboarding park and learned the local chapter of the Guardian Angels will hold its first graduation ceremony in mid-May.



Kane



Leighton

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James Gidosh and Kevin Pizzano of the Northeast Pennsylvania Skate Park Alliance updated council on efforts to build a facility in Wilkes-Barre.

The two men suggested the John Lance Memorial Park at the corner of Wilkes-Barre Boulevard and Scott Street. The park is used as a softball and baseball field and is in deteriorating condition, they said.

Gidosh and Pizzano want to build a permanent concrete skate park that they feel will attract skateboarders from miles around and will last much longer than pre-fab metal ramps. The two men would like to build a 15,000-to-25,000-square-foot park at an estimated cost of \$300,000 to \$500,000.

Gidosh said he has met with Luzerne County officials, and they support the idea. Gidosh said the county is seeking grant money to fund the project.

Mayor Tom Leighton said the site suggested is one of the most valuable city-owned properties, and there has been interest in it from developers. He and council Chairwoman Kathy Kane said they are not against a skate park, but the city needs more information and assurances before it can commit to the project.

Council Vice Chairman Tony Thomas Jr. has visited three skate parks – in Pottsville, Easton and Hackensack, N.J. – and he has talked to officials in Carbondale about a park there.

“All of these towns were against a skate park, and now they are all happy they have them,” he said. “In Pottsville, the kids keep the park in great shape, and they even have a concession stand that

raises money that is returned to the city for park maintenance.”

Councilman Rick Cronauer said he supports the idea. He and Thomas will meet with Gidosh and Pizzano before the next council meeting.

Scott Koppenhofer, coordinator of the Wilkes-Barre chapter of the Guardian Angels, told council the group will graduate nine new members on May 14. He said shortly afterward the chapter will begin walking patrols in the city.


“We understand our role,” Koppenhofer said. “We won’t be calling police with every little thing we notice, but we also know that nobody will commit a crime right in front of us. We will be an extra set of eyes and ears for the residents of the city.”

Koppenhofer said Guardian Angel founder Curtis Sliwa will attend graduation ceremonies on May 14 at 514 S. Main St.

In other action, the city will apply for a state grant for playground equipment at Coal Street Park. Leighton said the grant request will be \$113,000 with the city matching an equal amount.

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