

Nonprofit seeks to make public skateboard park a reality

BY GREG OLIVER
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CLEMSON — A newly established nonprofit called Skate Upstate is wanting to build a public skateboard park and Clemson is where they want it to happen.

"We all live in the city of Clemson and would love to have it here," Peter Hyatt, president of Skate Upstate told Clemson City Council at its Feb. 6 meeting. "But if we couldn't find it here, we would find another place outside the city."

Hyatt said with the expansion of Nettles Park, he and his family worked to get a skateboard park in the master plan. But the cost of the expansion is estimated at more than \$20 million and scheduled to happen in phases.

"The skateboard park was the last phase and I did the math and I was going to be 68 years old when it was built," Hyatt said.

Hyatt said the primary motivation of the nonprofit is to serve those kids that do not play traditional sports.

"You think about the kid sitting on his couch, he doesn't fit in with team sports, he's a little bit artistic, he's a little bit adventurous and he may not even own a skateboard yet," he said. "Then there's a skate park down the street from his house, he gets a skateboard and finally finds his passion."

Skate Upstate, Hyatt said, also wants "to build an inclusive and diverse community."

He said a skateboard park built on concrete will allow "anything that rolls" and that scooters, bicycles, roller blades and even wheelchairs can be used to



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Clemson resident Peter Hyatt, 46, who said he began skateboarding at age 10 and continues to do so, said the newly formed Skate Upstate nonprofit of which he is president is hoping to see a skateboard park come to the city. Hyatt appeared before city council earlier this month to discuss a private fundraising effort as well as seeking its financial support for the project.

bring people together.

While the initial goal was to raise \$100,000, Hyatt said the goal of a concrete skate park "if you were to build and look back and say I wish we could have done more" would cost between \$300,000-\$400,000. The group recently received a boost when notified by the family of the late Westminster resident Rolann Lee they wanted to make a \$11,000 donation.

"She (Lee) was from Westminster and taught special education," Hyatt said. "She found all these skater kids and wanted to build them a skating park with the vision to build one in Westminster. Westminster said, 'Let's do it' so she raised \$11,000

and, as you know, things change and the city said it wanted to go in a different direction so it didn't happen."

Lee passed away last year at age 81 and Hyatt said the nonprofit is grateful for her gift.

"Last week I was able to deposit that into our account so our vision and her vision, came 13 years apart," Hyatt said. "We want to honor Ms. Lee and continue to take her vision and build a skate park."

Hyatt said a skate park would help achieve the nonprofit's goal of increasing the Clemson brand for outdoor recreation and noted that the closest one is an hour and 20 minutes away.

"We want to keep kids

off the street and safe," he said. "People will use this skateboard park from far off places. People come from Greenville and far off places to ride the pump track and they'll do the same for a skate park."

Hopeful that the city will put some money behind the project, Hyatt said the old tennis courts next to the pump track at Clemson Park totals 19,000-square-feet. A skate park, he added, "would take up half of it."

Councilwoman Lillian Boatwright said she believes "Clemson would benefit from something as welcoming as this."

"There's obviously a ton of people who want to do this," she said. "There's obviously a need."



Clemson resident Brady Craig, vice-president of the non-profit Skate Upstate, has been skateboarding for 17 years and said the sport has created many meaningful relationships while teaching him about life and what it takes to be successful.