

Source

**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** City Manager and Staff  
**DATE:** December 18, 2008



Mike Hood



**RE: Tracker#2261: Lighting the CCRA Skate Park/Roller Hockey Rink**

**Summary:** At the December 1, 2008 Council meeting, Councilperson Paul Sturtz requested a report on the cost estimates for lighting the Columbia Cosmo Skate Park. In 1998, the original plan was for the City to construct the skate park and a local volunteer skate organization, Columbia Skateboard Association, consisting of skaters and parents, was going to raise funds to provide lights. Unfortunately, fundraising efforts failed, the volunteer skate group eventually ceased to exist, and lights were never installed.

The Department has contacted MUSCO Sports Lighting and received an estimate to provide and install lights at the Cosmo Skate Park (\$60,000-\$70,000) and the adjacent Cosmo Roller Hockey Rink (\$42,000-\$50,000). Total installed cost ranges from \$102,000-\$120,000. The department does not currently have any funding available at this time for such a project. A Skate/Bike Park project is identified in the City's Capital Improvement Program in the 6-10 year category with an unfunded budget amount of \$425,000. This could possibly be a future ballot issue project.

After nearly 10 years of skate park operation experience, the parks and recreation department has several concerns about lighting the skate park. These concerns range from the probable increase in the amount of litter, vandalism, and graffiti to an increase in the department's budget for operating and maintaining the lights (estimated at \$3,500 annually). From a risk management perspective, a lighted facility will be used more hours per day resulting in an increased exposure. However, the benefits of lighting both the skate park and the roller hockey rink would be an increase in the number of hours the facility is available for public use and potentially, the generation of revenue from future roller hockey leagues.

**Discussion:**

**History of Lights at the Skate Park and Roller Hockey Rink**

When designing and constructing the park in 1998-1999, the department worked with local skaters and a volunteer parent group regarding the overall design of the park. Once it was determined that lights would not be financially possible within the existing budget, the volunteer skate group agreed to raise money for lights after the skate park was constructed. Anticipating future lights, the department installed conduit from the electrical panel to various locations around the park. In the meantime, the skate group conducted various fund raising activities throughout the initial years of the park being open. Unfortunately, the fundraising efforts failed and the volunteer skate group eventually dissolved. The department does not currently have any immediate plans to light the skate park. In the City's Capital Improvement Program, there is a project in the 6-10 year category titled "Skate/Bike Park Improvements" that may be used to increase the size or light the Cosmo Skate Park; construct a new skate park elsewhere; or construct a combination skate/bike park. The project lists a budget of \$425,000 and

Fiscal Impact

YES

NO X

Other Info.

could possibly be funded by a future ballot issue.

#### Levels of Lighting Required for Skate Parks

There are many aspects to lighting a skate park including the impact on the skateboarders' ability to see changes in terrain, a significant factor for skate parks such as the Cosmo Skate Park. Therefore, the quality or amount of lighting has to be at certain levels in order to ensure that visual obstacles such as shadows and dark spaces are eliminated. There are specific standards for lighting levels for various facilities including athletic fields as determined by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA). IESNA has set forth four illumination classifications based on the level of play being accommodated on a lighted athletic field. The first level for social or recreational sports range from 20 to 30 foot-candles while the level required for professional play with large spectator attendance and television coverage is at 300 footcandles. Most of Columbia's sports facilities fall within the first two levels.

While IESNA does not specifically address lighting standards for skate parks, the department contacted several departments with lighted skate parks and found that a minimum of 30 footcandles was the standard. In comparison, the new baseball fields at the Thomas E "Country" Atkins Park has 50 footcandles on the infield and 30 footcandles in the outfield.

#### Cost Estimate

The department contacted MUSCO Sports Lighting and received an estimate of \$60,000-\$70,000 to light the skate park and another \$42,000-\$50,000 to light the adjacent roller hockey rink. The pricing for the skate park includes the material and labor to install four, sixty-foot tall poles. To light the roller hockey rink two more sixty-foot tall poles are needed and there will be two poles that will have lights aiming at both the skate park and the roller hockey rink. Total cost for the labor and material to light both the skate park and roller hockey rink ranges from \$102,000 to \$120,000.

#### Operating Cost of Lights

To determine the annual cost of lights at the skate park, the department estimated that the lights will be on approximately 750 hours per year. Using the MUSCO Light-Structure Green® technology and an estimated kilowatt/hour cost of \$0.085 the department estimates that the annual utility cost is approximately \$3,500 per year. Additionally, increased use will require increase maintenance including litter control and repairs. This is a difficult cost to estimate as there are many unknown factors.

Depending on the weather, the department currently patrols and picks-up the skate park approximately 2-3 times per week during the non-peak months (Nov-March) and conducts daily patrols during the peak use months (April-Oct). A lighted skate park may require additional patrols and clean-up during the non-peak months. This may require an additional 44-50 hours per year of maintenance labor. Since the park maintenance program does not have any part-time, temp help during the months of Nov-March, the department would have to conduct these patrols with full-time permanent staff. Based on an average labor hour of \$24.00 for full-time permanent park employees (\$18.00/hr + 33% benefits=\$23.94) this amounts to an additional \$1,056-\$1,200 of labor per year. Recognizing the difficulties in adding funds for full-time, permanent labor, the department would likely defer other maintenance activities in order to accommodate the

extra 44-50 hours needed to maintain the skate park.

#### Research on Other Lighted Skate Parks

In conducting a quick internet search, park staff found that most lighted skate parks fit into one of these two categories:

1. Skate park is fenced and has a controlled entry gate.
  - a. Gate is closed and access is restricted to scheduled park hours.
  - b. Membership or entry fees are charged and the park is staffed and supervised.
2. Skate Park is located in a hot or desert climate where daytime heat is excessive. These parks are either open year round, free of charge similar to Cosmo's Skate Park or may include a gated, restricted access and/or membership fees. Several examples of both were found in states such as California, Arizona, Nevada & Texas.

In all cases the lights are set on a timer where they are scheduled to turn off at a pre-determined time. Most skate parks surveyed restricted lighting to 9:00 pm during the school months and 10:00 pm during the summer. One skate park had hours up to 11:00 pm during the summer to match the hours of the park. Cosmo Park has posted hours up to 12:00 midnight due to the number of adult softball tournaments and leagues that often find games ending at 11:00-11:30 pm. The department recommends that if lights are erected that the hours during the school months be set to 9:00 pm and non-school months 10:00 pm. This matches the ending time of most of our youth sports league games.

#### Miscellaneous Comments

From a risk management perspective, a lighted facility will be used more hours per day resulting in an increased exposure to accidents or risk management related incidents. Other negative aspects of lighting include the potential for increased vandalism. The Cosmo Skate Park is no different than most of the skate parks operated by other communities. Skate parks are historically linked with vandalism, graffiti, and littering. Vandalism, and site damage typically occurs late evening or early morning and on those occasions when large groups have assembled. Thus, many local authorities are reluctant to install lights. Compared to many skate parks, Columbia's skate park is relatively free of graffiti due to the department's "zero tolerance" policy. Any graffiti is removed within 24 hours of discovery, thus reducing the opportunity for vandals to show off their work. Unfortunately, the Cosmo Skate Park does have a substantial litter problem. During the peak summer months it often takes 2 staff members an average of approximately 1-2 hours per day to pick-up the litter scattered about the park. This is just under the amount of time needed to pick-up litter at the six field Rainbow Softball Center which has games from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Increased hours of operation may only increase the amount of litter and the time required to keep the park clean.

#### Conclusion/Recommendation

Park staff does not have any immediate plans to light the skate park as it has not been a high priority considering the failed fundraising efforts of the Columbia Skateboard Association; lack of any or substantial revenue to offset expenses; and the current status of the City's financial situation. Finding funds for this project would be difficult at this time as possible funding sources are limited to the previously committed Park Sales Tax. If the Council believes that the City should pursue the lighting of the skate park as a future project, staff would recommend that the project be seriously considered for

inclusion on the next park sales tax ballot issue.

**Suggested Council Action:** Accept this report. If the Council wishes to take action other than that recommended, provide staff with direction as to how to proceed.