

GREENFIELD

Long-awaited skate park project underway

Skaters share excitement; \$980K project is expected to be completed by May

By **MARY BYRNE**
Staff Writer

GREENFIELD — Just over a decade ago, before the old skate park had even closed, city residents began initiating conversations with local officials about their visions for a new one.

Those visions began to be realized Monday morning with the start of construction of a new skate park in the northern part of the municipal parking lot behind the former Wilson's De-

partment Store, between Davis and Chapman streets. Contractors began work by installing temporary fencing and erosion control materials.

The new structure will replace the former 17,000-square-foot skate park on Olive Street, which was demolished in 2010.

“We’re super excited,” said Thomas Bullock, one of many local skaters who have been involved in planning and fundraising efforts. “We’ve been waiting for this for a long time, and we’re very excited it’s finally here.”

Construction of the \$980,000 skate park is expected to be completed by May, according to Recreation Director Christy Moore. Although costs have increased by roughly \$200,000,

the difference will be covered using \$200,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

In addition to ARPA funding, the park is supported by \$350,000 in capital funds, \$30,000 in community donations and a \$400,000 state Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant.

Bullock, who skates in a gorilla costume each year in the Franklin County Fair parade, said it’s also become a hobby of his daughter’s. The family goes to the skate park in Turners Falls, but it isn’t always feasible to get there. Otherwise, they skate in the street.

“She’s in roller skates now, too,”

SEE **DOWNTOWN SKATE A6**



CONTRIBUTED

A virtual rendering of the roughly 12,000-square-foot skate park, which includes four entry points (three handicapped accessible), a shade structure, benches, a solar charging station and water refill stations.

Downtown skate park project getting underway

FROM A1

Bullock said. “She’s been involved in trying to get support and raise awareness for (the project).”

Another local skater, 12-year-old Johnny McIntyre — who has also attended many public meetings for the project — is looking forward to a location closer to home where he can skate with his friends.

“I’m very excited,” said Johnny, who picked up skateboarding about a year ago. “I’m excited that it’s going to be a lot different than Turners. It adds in more street skating and less vert skating.”

Barry Scott, who moved to Greenfield around 2013 as talks began, said he’s excited to see the city finally get a new skate park built. He recalls working with Ben Miner and Brian Rodix on raising money and awareness of the need for a new park. Last year, he also worked alongside Ben Goldsher, Al Goodwin, Jeremy Latch and Rodix to help plan a benefit that took place in August at Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center.

“Every town has a baseball diamond, a basketball court ... and given the popularity of skateboarding, riding bicycles, scootering, it’s about time every town has a skate park,” Scott commented.

Scott said he was grateful not only to the “torch bearers”



STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

Fences and traffic cones block off the northern part of the municipal parking lot between Chapman and Davis streets in Greenfield, where the skate park will be built.

of the local effort but also to Moore for incorporating suggestions from the people who will ultimately be using it.

“It’s such a niche thing,” Scott said. “It’s growing, but the specifications of how a park should be designed really needs to be done by people who’ve done it for a long time. I’ve seen towns screw it up ... so we are grateful that Christy really heard us out and let actual skaters, and people who attended meetings, have a lot of input in the design.”

Pillar Design Studios, which designed the skate park, has been involved in similar pro-

jects in Turners Falls, Springfield and Worcester, according to Brad Siedlecki, president of the landscape architecture firm. In April, Siedlecki shared a virtual rendering of the roughly 12,000-square-foot skate park, which includes four entry points (three of which are handicap accessible), a shade structure, benches, a solar charging station for electronics and water bottle refill stations. In June, the project was approved by the Planning Board, with the condition that bicycle racks and crosswalks be added.

Now a Turners Falls resident, Scott, who has been a

skater for about 25 years, said he looks forward to when the park is complete.

“That’s the joy of having more parks pop up — unlike a baseball diamond, what you’re able to do with it is contingent on how a park is designed,” he said. “Turners is so popular it gets crowded with folks, and the elements in Greenfield are going to be refreshingly new, so I look forward to spending my time over there.”

Reporter Mary Byrne can be reached at mbyrne@recorder.com or 413-930-4429. Twitter: @MaryEByrne.