

GREENFIELD

Soup, games to benefit future skate park

Hope & Olive to host fundraiser

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Recorder Staff

GREENFIELD — Over the past decade, Greenfield has upgraded many parks, but it has taken the town years to focus on what many residents have been asking for — a skate park.

Now, plans are in the works for a skate park on a piece of town-owned property on Beacon Street near the

middle school.

To kick off a fundraising campaign for the project, Greenfield Recreation, Greening Greenfield, Skate Greenfield and other supporters will hold a Soup and Games Night at Hope & Olive restaurant on Sept. 11 from 5 to 7:30 p.m. In addition to free soup and games, the fundraiser will feature baked goods, a raffle and more information about how to become part of making the skate park a reality.

“We have a site and numerous partners, so now is the time to get input from the community, make a design and find the funds,” Recreation Director Christy Moore said.

Last May, a public forum filled a meeting room at 20 Sanderson St., with many residents expressing support for the project. Several people pointed out that Greenfield has done a good job of meeting the needs of young people who are interested in team sports, martial arts, dance and other endeavors, while local skaters are still looking for a safe space to pursue their sport.

During the public forum, many skaters said they often skate on streets or stairways that are off limits or dangerous when they aren't able to get to the Turners Falls skate park —

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Nate Jackson of Greenfield rides at the Montague skate park.

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FILE PHOTO

Skate

FROM A3

which is often overcrowded.

For several years, Greenfield hosted the area's only skate park, off Olive Street, but it was dismantled when the Olver Transit Center was built. More recently, as part of the Unity Park improvements in Turners Falls, a new skate park was built, which has attracted some Greenfield skaters, who nonetheless have wished for their own park closer to home.

"I really enjoy skating with my friends," said Iggy Pasiglia, 13. "Right now, we go to each other's houses and skate wherever we can. We would love to have a skate park."

As a child in the 1980s, local cabinetmaker Benjamin Miner learned how to skateboard by watching videos of people skating in West Coast skate parks with envy. Living on the East Coast, he had no place to practice other than in the street. Miner started Skate Greenfield and a Facebook page in 2013 as a way to draw attention to the need for a skate park, and to organize events for local skaters in the meantime.

"I'm really excited that the town is committed to seeing this project through," he said. "It will fill a huge gap in the many professional grade athletic facilities in town."

Last year, Greening Greenfield became a major partner

in the effort to build a skate park.

"We are all about improving quality of life and sustainability, so offering young people opportunities for self-expression and to build self-confidence and leadership is natural for us," Greening Greenfield member Susan Worgaftik said.

The skate park is sited for a piece of town-owned land on Beacon Street near the middle school. The property currently contains several dilapidated buildings that are contaminated with asbestos and lead paint, and would be cleaned up as part of the project.

The partners plan to apply for state grants and to private foundations to cover the majority of the cost, but several of the grants will require matching funds. The town has already received a \$10,000 anonymous donation to kick off the campaign.

From here, the partners will hold community meetings, hire a professional to draw up preliminary plans and an estimate, and get grant proposals written. They anticipate the process will take several years.

Donations will be collected at the Hope and Olive Soup and Games night, and checks can also be made out to the Friends of Greenfield Recreation and mailed to 20 Sander-son St., Greenfield.

For more information, visit greenfieldrecreation.com or call the Recreation Department at 413-772-1553.