

For the record of the Capitola City Council Meeting, 5/10/07

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers:

The inappropriate statements Mr. Nicol made sent a shock wave through skate communities around the world, in turn resulting some inappropriate responses as an expression of anger and hurt. Some remarks and language may have been just as inappropriate, and I hope Mr. Nicol will accept my apology on their behalf.

In an e-mail to me from Mr. Nicol he claimed his statement was taken out of context. I invited him to make a statement to correct that and I would publish it. He didn't respond.

In the same e-mail he prided himself as... Quote: "As a former Olympic track & field coach and one of the most prominent leaders of youth sports fundraising in the Santa Cruz Community for 35 years, I'd be happy to talk to you about anything sports-related."

I felt Wow he's our man! and asked if he would help raise funds not only for a park in Capitola but for more locations in the county. But apparently he doesn't consider skateboarding sports-related, as I got no response to that either.

He added: "The skateboard park project has failed in our community due to overwhelming public opposition."

I needed to see and hear all this for myself so I could approach this fairly and even perhaps give Mr. Nicol the benefit of the doubt. I purchased a tape of the meeting from Community TV. I found Mr. Nicol's remarks NOT out of context at all, and in fact the reporter could have made him sound even worse had she completed the rest of his statement: I never have and I never will. At the end he says "I'm done" referring to an incident kicking a skateboarder out of downtown, then recommended the project be scrapped entirely.

After watching the testimony of about 20 Capitola residents, I did not find them to be NIMBYs at all, and I apologize to them as well if that assumed sentiment got out there. On the contrary, they did their homework even consulted Stephany Aguilar (Good choice; she's experienced; we trained her well). I did not hear even one say they didn't want a skatepark, in fact most said they did. Some were parents of skaters and understand the importance of appropriate skatepark size. I only heard that they felt the Noble lot is inappropriate and they are absolutely right; it was a poor unresearched recommendation and I'm happy to hear the recommendation failed.

There was a comment made about the lack of skaters showing for the last meeting. City government is not on the everyday minds of the average youth. Stephany and even City of Santa Cruz gave us the courtesy of making an effort to include skateboarders whenever the skatepark was on their agenda. We are not an organized group, we are not a cult, we don't have regular meetings or newsletters or hang out together all the time, and when things like this come up, it's hard to organize spur of the moment. But, we are getting better! Skateboarders are just people who skate and have jobs, kids, homework, dogs, paper routes, church, school, community service, and mortgages.

There was a comment implying skaters should come up with the money to build their own skatepark. They do try. The most successful was in Scotts Valley, skaters raised over 400K. But this was spearheaded by a non-profit through a large skateboarding business. (Sessions). It's hard to get non-profit status now, which is about the only way to receive donations. And which other sports are the kids expected to raise money for their facilities, beyond bake sales? There is Prop 40 providing funds, and many more state grant resources out there for parks and rec facilities. Big chains donate to communities youth, Home Depot is a huge community donor and that could be explored.

In light of Mr. Nicol's remarks, his obvious bias against skateboarders, which he says won't change in the future, his refusal to apologize even after public outcry, and even if he apologizes now, I feel the damage is already done. I feel he is in violation of the oath he took for this office, he may have a conflict of interest, and should not be allowed to continue to make recommendations and decisions about an item he openly opposes. He is in position to become Mayor and this isn't the last you are going to have skateboarding on your agenda. And I don't mean that as a threat.

My recommendation is to return the allocated money back into the current budget, form a skatepark advisory body of residents and skateboarders, replace Mr. Nicol with someone who has no known biases or prejudices against anyone, and move forward exploring and funding the McGregor property as the preferred site. Don't sell property which has potential to well-serve the community and county especially its youth. Don't miss out on the lively community spirit and pride a lot of cities are experiencing in planning their skateparks.

Respectfully,

Clarkie, Editor Real Skate Online Magazine  
Santa Cruz