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Skaters enjoy some time at the Light Park skate park earlier this summer. Vandalism to the parks, however, could force the city to discontinue them. L&T photo/Giseelle Arredondo

By GISEELLE ARREDONDO

- Leader & Times

For a while now, rumors have been circulating Mary Frame Park that its skate park is getting completely replaced due to the ramps being rusty and old.

However, Parks Director Bill Houk clarified that such plans are far from motion.

## Skate park vandalism expensive issue for city

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“There’s not a set plan in place on it. We have talked about moving it to another section of the park,” he said. “We have talked about removing it, but I don’t think that’s gonna happen. We are still trying to keep things active for the kids on the south end of town.”

Clearly, kids from all around town attend these parks on a daily basis, and it’s a high priority of the commission and city administration to give these kids outdoor recreation. The only problem in sight is the vandalism located in both of the skate parks.



Houk did not quote any numbers, but he added that vandalism does cost quite a bit of money.

“The biggest issue of the skate park is vandalism. They’re very high maintenance. The north park is very high maintenance ‘cause you have vandalism, graffiti, so it makes you question a little bit having skate parks, but if we could have everyone respect them, that’s what we are here for, to give them recreation.”

So vandalism doesn’t do a good job at washing itself off?

“We spend a lot of money on chemicals, too. A lot of them we cannot get off. If you look a little closer, you can see where we tried to clean it. If you took how much money we spend in chemicals and maintenance hours a year in the skate park, it adds up to quite a bit. It’s expensive, and it makes it hard for people who really want to do more.”

In other words, more would be done and added to the skate park if the money would stop being aimed at cleaning up doodles.

“Well, sure, if I could take all that money I spend maintaining the skate park and put that towards adding to the skate park,” he said.

Houk visited with some of the skateboarders earlier this year.

“I caught some kids at the pavilion and they were using the benches for railing or whatever. I’m not a skateboarder, but a kind of a rail. I said, ‘We built such a nice skate park. Why are you not over there instead of here tearing up things? And they said, ‘Well, there’s not a rail over there. We didn’t get one put in.’ And the kids were nice about it. That was one of the concerns they had, so the next week we went down, and we put in a rail.”

“We don’t have a lot of money to keep adding to it, but if instead of being destructive, if they’d come and talk to us their concerns, it would probably work better,” Houk said. “When the kids go skate on the pavilion, they jump off of the side and tear all of our plants up. We will work with them. We just need them to work with us too.”

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