



Friends of the RocCity Skatepark
c/o James W. Maddison
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Joseph Lee
Mayor
Village of Hilton
59 Henry Street
Hilton, New York 14468

April 29, 2011

Re: Proposed Local Law for Skateboard: Hilton Code Chapter 19C

Dear Mayor Lee:

Please to not pass *Proposed Local Law for Skateboard: Hilton Code Chapter 19C* at the upcoming Village Board meeting.

I am the President of the Board of Directors for the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark. We are a highly organized citizen group with incorporation and non-profit status pending with the New York State Department of State and Internal Revenue Service accordingly. Our mission is two-fold: to pursue the creation, maintenance, and growth of a skatepark system in the City of Rochester, New York and to serve as an advocacy group for all progression-oriented sports. This letter is part of the advocacy function of this group.

We understand the perceived dangers of skateboarding. We also understand that when policy makers *actively* make choices to not support this very healthy outlet in which a large segment population participates, this segment of the population will be put at risk by pursuing their passion on infrastructure that is not designed properly. When skateboarders have no choice but to pursue their passion on the village's infrastructure, damage may occur. This is both dangerous for the person and can be costly and frustrating.

The proposed Hilton Code Chapter 19C states that offenders of this local law can be **imprisoned for up to fifteen (15) days**. Furthermore, the clauses in 19C-2 essentially make skateboarding illegal because of the subjective nature of how it is written. Thus, skateboarding in Hilton can lead to imprisonment. Rather than making skateboarding illegal and punishable with imprisonment, we suggest that there is a healthier, calmer, collaborative and productive way to educate the community, value the people (mostly youth) who participate in the sport as members of the community, and maintain the credibility of the Village Board.

First, I offer you some facts about skateboarding. Skateboarding is considered a progression-oriented sport because, like video games, the goal is for the individual to progress their ability. Unlike video games, it is an extremely healthy outlet (60 minutes of skateboarding burns more calories than running at 12-minute pace, playing basketball, lacrosse, tennis, swimming or baseball). Because of the progressive nature of the activity, people usually participate for a long time.



There are 11.08 million skaters in the United States and it is a US\$4.8 billion market. The market is getting older – in 2008, 71% of participants were 12 to 17 years old (gaining purchasing power). In 2006, 45% fit that age range. Skateboarding is statistically safer than football, baseball, basketball, snowboarding, soccer, and ice hockey and this finding has been triangulated using many different methods and there is redundancy of evidence. There has never been a successful lawsuit against a public or private skatepark.

With the vast, overwhelming majority of participants being youth who are participating in a safe and very healthy activity, please see that a collaborative, educational policy-oriented approach will be much more successful than making the activity illegal and punishable with imprisonment.

The Board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark recommends working from an educational perspective that engages youth and their parents to solve the problem collaboratively. The nearest skatepark to the Village of Hilton is over three miles away, in Parma, and it is very small and over 11 years old at this point. Often when capital projects are undertaken, there is excess material that has been purchased in bulk. These materials can be used to construct obstacles designed for skateboarding in areas that are safe. The cost of constructing an actual skatepark is low (roughly \$25 per square foot) compared with the cost of alienating your youth or keeping them in harm's way by not providing them with an outlet. In addition, well designed and constructed skateable obstacles and skateparks require virtually no maintenance, unlike athletic fields (I am also Vice President of Eastside Little League in the city, and field maintenance is a Sisyphean undertaking).

An opportunity to engage the youth of Hilton and bring them into the political process with a sport that they are passionate about is clearly an effective way of proceeding with an ethic of care, while vilifying them and making an sport that they love punishable with imprisonment is further alienating them. As I mentioned, we are a very organized citizen group with a social network of nearly 5,000 people (adults and youth) following our work (this letter will be posted on all of our virtual networks and on our web page; www.roccitypark.org). This proposed law is being scrutinized by this loyal following, and if it is passed it will be made clear to this entire network that they are not welcome in the Village of Hilton. Hopefully the small business community in the village will not want to alienate the purchasing power of this group.

The minutes from the March 1, 2011 meeting of the Village Board stated that the issue was discussed, but failed to provide a record of this discussion. Minimally, we request that you table the vote for another meeting and give us an opportunity to address the village board. I can be reached at the number, address, or e-mail address listed on the first page.

With Regard,

James W. Maddison
President, Friends of the Roc City Skatepark

cc: Board of the Friends of the Roc City Park