



**Friends of Newport Skatepark**

**[www.friendsofnewportskatepark.com](http://www.friendsofnewportskatepark.com)**

**Case for Support – August 7, 2023 – Version 3**

**INTRODUCTION**

City council is moving forward with building a new park in Newport's North End on the corner of Coddington Highway and John Chaffee Boulevard. A full-size basketball court will be installed in the Summer of 2023. Next to the basketball court, 20,000 square feet has been designated by the city for a skatepark.

Friends of Newport Skatepark (FONS) is a 501(c)(3) Public Charity organized for the purpose of advocating, designing, and fundraising for Newport's new skatepark. FONS 501(c)(3) Determination Letter is attached for your records.

FONS serves two (2) primary functions:

1. To be the centralized voice of Newport's skateboard community to city officials to ensure a modern, world class skatepark is designed and built; and
2. To privately fundraise \$1,000,000 for the construction of the skatepark.







## **BACKGROUND**

To fully understand the present posture of the city's efforts to build a skatepark, the background leading up to now is important.

The campaign to bring a modern skatepark to the city dates back decades, but the latest efforts began in earnest in 2016, when Tim Boucher, then a senior at Rogers High School, brought attention to the decaying, dangerous, skatepark located at Easton's Beach.

The issues with the Easton's Beach Skatepark were three fold: one, it was poorly designed; two, it was exposed to the harsh waterfront elements of wind and sand; and three, and probably most unfortunate, it was not accessible by Newport kids – located miles away from any Newport neighborhoods.

By February 2017, for good reason, the city had demolished the old park.

Simultaneously, the Newport Open Space Partnership published its Newport Tree, Park and Open Space Master Plan (the "Master Plan"). Relocating the now demolished skatepark was identified as an implementation priority and an identified need.

By June of 2017, Tim's effort had over \$60,000.00 to build the new skatepark.

And while the old skatepark was demolished, and the city's intentions to build a new, relocated park had been unequivocally established by the city's Master Plan, the question of where the skatepark would be built remained unanswered.

At this point, FONS encountered another hurdle: The Rhode Island Interlocal Trust (the "Interlocal Trust"), the insurer of cities and town in Rhode Island, would not insure a public skatepark with features exceeding four (4) feet in height.

This posed a real problem. FONS wants to build a modern park that would keep all levels of skateboarders engaged, comparable to the skateparks now being built all over the county. Before anything else, FONS had to refocus their attention to changing the Interlocal Trust's height restrictions.

FONS contacted the Interlocal Trust directly to discuss updating and relaxing current rules. We were well received. The Interlocal Trust had not reviewed the standards for skateparks since the 1990's. They also noted no claims had even been made related to a skatepark in Rhode Island.

On January 30, 2019, Scott Wheeler, the city's Superintendent of Parks Grounds and Forestry, and representatives of the Interlocal Trust met onsite at the Lynch Family Skatepark in Boston, Massachusetts, a city owned, privately funded skatepark on the Charles River built in 2015. The purpose of this meeting was to give the decision makers at the Interlocal Trust first-hand experience with the type of modern park that is now the industry standard across the country.

By June of 2019 the Interlocal Trust has updated its policies regarding skatepark height restrictions. We had the green light to move forward with planning and design of a modern skatepark for the City of Newport.

At this point, the question of where the skatepark would be built remained unanswered, but tentative discussions proposed a park within the Abbruzzi Sports Complex located at the corner of Maple Avenue and JT Connell Highway.

On November 13, 2019, a resolution was presented by the City Manager to the city council recommending the city seek funding in an effort to remove the tee-ball field at the Abbruzzi Athletic Complex and install a full-size basketball court - along with a future skate park being planned and funded privately...”. The council adopted the proposed resolution, specific to removing the tee-ball field and the basketball court, by a 7 – 0 vote.

On September 16, 2020, the council voted unanimously to accept \$100,000.00 from the DEM to build a basketball court at the Abbruzzi Athletic Complex.

On May 6, 2021, FONS was invited by the city council to a workshop to discuss the prospects of a skatepark. At this workshop, the proposed reconfigured Abbruzzi Athletic Complex was met with opposition. Newport Little League was very disappointed in the city’s proposed plans of repurposing an existing tee-ball field. And while council members made clear the importance of improved recreational facilities in the city, they began to question whether displacing an existing use was the right way to go about it.

Some council members also questioned whether the immediate surrounding neighborhood supported the proposed basketball court and skatepark.

For the next year, this dispute dominated the narrative. FONS took no position on whether one use was superior to another, but made clear to the council that the decision where to build a park was for city council to decide. And while FONS would do what we could to assist the city with the process, it was not FONS’ place to decide how to best serve the community.

FONS did respond to the councilors’ doubts whether the community closest to the proposed park supported the changes. Up until this point, FONS had always operated on the assumption that the city unequivocally decided that a skatepark was an identified need of the city.

In response, FONS took to the streets in July 2021. Going door to door in the neighborhood closest to the park, FONS presented the proposed changes to residents. Over one hundred residents signed a petition supporting a basketball court and skatepark at Abbruzzi Athletic Complex.

On September 22, 2021, a resolution was presented by Councilor Ceglie and Councilor Bova requesting “to designate the use of the Theodore Michaud t-ball field at the Abbruzzi Sports Complex to build basketball courts and modern skatepark and to relocate t-ball to another location in the city”. After tense discussions, and over the objections of Newport Little League, the

resolution was ultimately approved by a 4 – 2 vote, with the condition that an acceptable new tee-ball field was built before the existing tee-ball field was removed.

FONS was excited. Newport This Week reported “Skatepark Location Finally Approved”. But meeting the condition of building a new tee-ball field proved to be more difficult than anticipated, and ultimately, the condition could not be met.

By May of 2022, unable to accommodate Newport Little League, the plans to build a basketball court and skatepark at Abbruzzi Athletic Complex were scrapped. But city officials, determined to bring a basketball court to the North End and relocate the skatepark, presented an alternative plan to develop a new park on city property located on the corner of JT Connell Highway and John Chaffee Boulevard.

On July 13, 2022, the city council took the first steps to making this new park a reality by repurposing the \$100,000.00 for the basketball court to the new recreational facilities.

Following that vote, on October 26, 2022, the city council by unanimous vote designated a 20,000 square foot portion of the new recreation area for the purposes of a skatepark. Following the case for support, see attached Schematic Map showing the area approved for a skatepark.

Seven years after Tim Boucher launched his senior project, our city’s skatepark finally had its home.

With a site designated, FONS has now turned its attention to raise funds to build a park that provides the city’s kids and families of Newport deserves.

Since 2016, over \$300,000.00 has been raised to build the skatepark.

## **AN EXCITING NEW PARK FOR THE CITY OF NEWPORT**

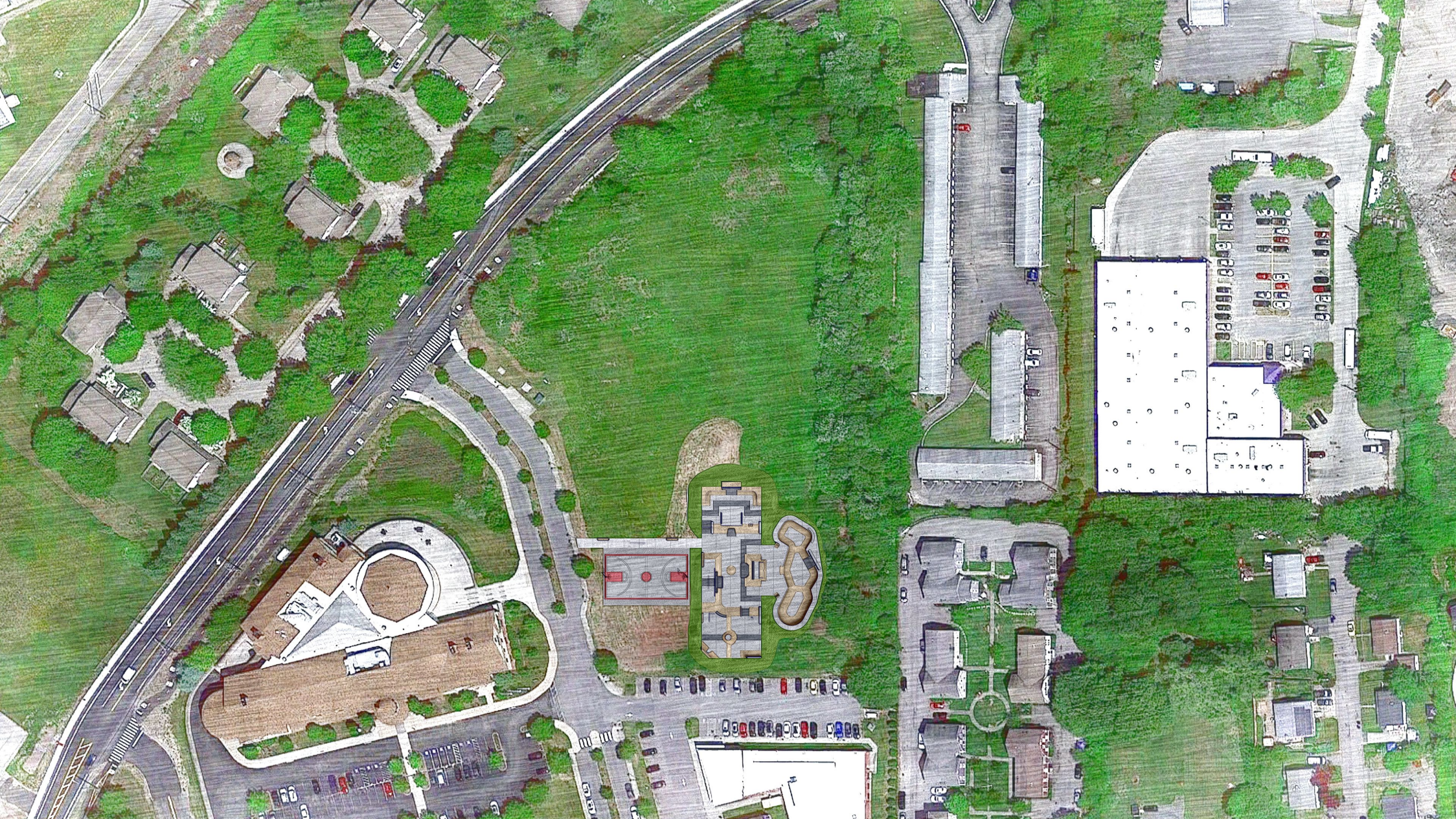
This is the most exciting – and impactful - development project in the North End. This is why it's so special:

1. Location. The new park is in walking distance of residential neighborhoods. Once built, literally hundreds of Newport, and Middletown, youth will be able to walk out their front doors and safely walk to a full size basketball court and skatepark.
2. Skateparks build and sustain healthy communities. As a gathering place for dedicated, athletic youth, the skatepark provides the forum for visitors young and old, beginning and skilled, to meet and share experiences.
3. No Displacement of Existing Uses. The historic use of the Abbruzzi Athletic Complex remains. While the process took over two years, this park landed in the right spot for all;
4. First modern skatepark in Rhode Island. With the Interlocal Trust rules updated, the city and FONS can build a modern skatepark, in line with what is being built all over the country and that challenges all levels, allowing kids to progress and grow a love for an active, outdoor sport;
5. Skateboarding is inclusive. For many kids, this skatepark will become a home away from home. With no fees, coaches or expensive equipment, the barriers to entry are not like other sports. All it takes is a board and a passion.

To visualize such a wonderful resource for Aquidneck Island's kids, see the renderings attached following created by Spohn Ranch Skateparks, a California based skatepark design and build firm with over forty (40) years experience building public skateparks across the country.

FONS is here to make sure this exciting new park is done right, ensuring that the kids of Aquidneck Island have a skatepark that'll keep them engaged, active and outdoors.











## **FONS' FUNDRAISING GOAL**

FONS will fundraise 100% of the cost for all skatepark related improvements and has a fundraising goal on **\$1,000,000**.

FONS' official fundraising campaign is scheduled to launch in May 2023. FONS will actively pursue donations by individual, family and corporate donors through the end of 2023

To date, over **\$300,000** has been donated through private donations.

One very important notes regarding funds raised: It's not all or nothing. FONS' fundraising goal is ambitious, but we think this project has the support. If fundraising falls short of FONS' initial million dollar goal, plans and scope can easily be adjusted to match available funds. The city and FONS intends on breaking ground in May 2024.



## **FONS LEADERSHIP**

FONS is a member based organization operating by its Board of Directors elected by its membership. FONS' current Directors are as follows:

Michael J. Richards

Paul Marshall

Stephen Abbruzi

Danielle Abbruzi

Mark Amaral

Jay Johnson

Donny Barley



## **HOW YOU CAN HELP**

1. Make a donation. All build funds are held with Wells Fargo Advisors. Wire instructions are available upon request. Checks may be mailed to the following address:

Friends of Newport Skatepark  
36 Washington Square  
Newport, RI 02840

2. Make a Pledge to Donate in 2023. FONS fundraising efforts will continue in earnest through 2023. If you or your organization can not give now, but can later in the year or first quarter 2024, make a pledge. Pledges help FONS plan and inspire others to join the effort.
3. Host an Event. Mobilize your tribe and the ones closest to you. Host a dinner. Help your kids organize a bake sale. If you are inspired by this project – help inspire others. Any support you need, FONS is here to help.

Thank you for your support.

**FRIENDS OF NEWPORT SKATEPARK**



INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE  
P. O. BOX 2508  
CINCINNATI, OH 45201

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Date: **FEB 13 2020**

FRIENDS OF NEWPORT SKATEPARK  
36 WASHINGTON SQUARE  
NEWPORT, RI 02840

Employer Identification Number:  
84-2597187  
DLN:  
29053347318029  
Contact Person:  
CUSTOMER SERVICE ID# 31954  
Contact Telephone Number:  
(877) 829-5500  
Accounting Period Ending:  
December 31  
Public Charity Status:  
509(a)(2)  
Form 990/990-EZ/990-N Required:  
Yes  
Effective Date of Exemption:  
August 2, 2019  
Contribution Deductibility:  
Yes  
Addendum Applies:  
No

Dear Applicant:

We're pleased to tell you we determined you're exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3). Donors can deduct contributions they make to you under IRC Section 170. You're also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under Section 2055, 2106, or 2522. This letter could help resolve questions on your exempt status. Please keep it for your records.

Organizations exempt under IRC Section 501(c)(3) are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. We determined you're a public charity under the IRC Section listed at the top of this letter.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that you're required to file Form 990/990-EZ/990-N, our records show you're required to file an annual information return (Form 990 or Form 990-EZ) or electronic notice (Form 990-N, the e-Postcard). If you don't file a required return or notice for three consecutive years, your exempt status will be automatically revoked.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that an addendum applies, the enclosed addendum is an integral part of this letter.

For important information about your responsibilities as a tax-exempt organization, go to [www.irs.gov/charities](http://www.irs.gov/charities). Enter "4221-PC" in the search bar to view Publication 4221-PC, Compliance Guide for 501(c)(3) Public Charities, which describes your recordkeeping, reporting, and disclosure requirements.

FRIENDS OF NEWPORT SKATEPARK

Sincerely,

*Stephen A. Martin*

Director, Exempt Organizations  
Rulings and Agreements