

6/3/2006 1:24:00 AM

Skaters hanging tough

By **BRANDY EMILY**

A minimum of \$100,000 is the goal for a group of Seymour residents launching the latest campaign to bring a skatepark to the area.

Tuesday night, a group of seven adults and children met at West Side Park to organize the work involved in the proposed 20,000-square-foot project.

Matt Nicholson, owner of B2 Bikes and Boards, is heading up the project, which is his fourth time working on it since 1993. "We will get all that information that the city wants to know," Nicholson said. "We are planning to go into the meeting with exact information."

Before the meeting, Nicholson said he plans to cooperate with the city on the skatepark project.

"We are trying to work with the city because essentially they are the ones that hold all the power," Nicholson said.

He said he hopes to present the city of Seymour with detailed information of all the specifics of the park in three months.

Dividing themselves into subcommittees of location, fundraising, design and communications, the group decided to reconvene in two weeks.

"We need especially the kids because you know what you like," Nicholson said. Youth are needed because ultimately the project is for them, he said.

He said the park will give kids a place to skate, instead of skating anywhere they can now, including outside businesses and around town.

"Not every kid is a bat-and-ball kid," Nicholson said. He said Seymour has talented kids in extreme sports and needs to keep them in the area.

Pastor Rick Prather of Christ Covenant Church was in attendance at the meeting and said one of his goals is to change the perception of the average skatepark and the people using it.

"If we are going to support it, we have to support it in a positive way," Prather said

Nicholson said the kids need to be aware that they are the ones who need to change the negative perception.

After looking at statistics gathered by members of Leadership Jackson County for the city of Seymour, Nicholson said he came to the conclusion the project would cost at least \$100,000. Fundraiser ideas so far include buttons, car washes, calendars and T-shirts.

Nicholson said he has been involved with the skatepark project since 1993. He said at that time he was a teenager and has since seen the project fail about every two years to three years.

Nicholson said there are many great choices in town for the location of a skatepark, and at this point in the project he would be happy with any of them the city would accept.

"As long as it's within city limits, it's a bus ride away," Nicholson said. He said now kids are driving to skate parks in Indianapolis, Louisville, Columbus and Scottsburg to use their skateparks.

"After it is built I'm not opposed to helping them raise money for maintenance and improvements," Nicholson said.

"We have got to get out and do this," Prather said.

Seymour Park and Recreation Department Director Jeff Vance said the park and recreation board asked the group to come up with a general idea for the skatepark.

If you go

■ **Who:** Seymour residents are meeting to discuss a possible skatepark for the Seymour area. Subcommittees are working on the areas of location, design, fundraising and communications. The meeting is open for anyone wanting to help with the project.

■ **What:** A 20,000-square-foot area for extreme sports such as skateboarding and bicycling.

■ **When:** 5:30 p.m. June 13

■ **Where:** Shields Park Shelter House

“A general plan of attack of how this could be moved forward,” Vance said. Vance said he has seen several other skateparks in the area, and the cost of the project would depend on the design.

Nicholson said he hopes the park would have a balance of vert and street skating.

Street skating is skateboarding on concrete surfaces; vert skating is skateboarding on ramps that are horizontal with a vertical ramp.

“There will be something for everyone,” Nicholson said.