
Central Park Dance Skaters Association

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Rumors, Rumors Everywhere, But Not a Drop (of Truth) to Drink

Since the current set of problems erupted on Skaters Road, a number of rumors have worked their way up and down the road. "It's because of so-and-so's wife," "It's the rich people that live on the side of the park," "It's because Wollman Rink wants to close us down so everyone will skate there."

The steering committee investigates these rumors as they arise. However, most rumors have proven to be totally groundless, and reflect the desire to find a one-sentence answer as to the source of our problems.

We have contacted the management at Wollman Rink, and have found them to be supportive of our efforts. Wollman's clientele foremost is tourists, followed by roller bladers and then corporate, school and institutional outings. Our skaters only go there in numbers Friday and Saturday nights, and thus are only a small fraction of the weekly attendance.

We have been victimized by others making superficial judgements about us. Let's not inflict this type of injustice on anyone else. All skaters must stick together!

-- The Editor

What's Up!

Action Steps Now!:

∑ We're having our first official fund raiser at Mike's loft; 201 Front St Bklyn (Sat., 8:00 P.M.)

∑ Sunday - skate around lower loop, (2:00-4:00 P.M.) Last week:

∑ The required forms were filed to incorporate the CPDSA; we're now "doing business as" CPDSA, Inc.

∑ Press kits were sent to all major print and broadcast media.

∑ A generally favorable article about our skaters appeared in the *New York Times* (Monday, April 24.)

∑ The first draft of our official proposal to the Parks Dept. has been completed.

Next week:

∑ The CPDSA will officially file for a permit for amplified music on Skaters' Road (Dead Road.)

∑ The CPDSA proposal will be sent to all area politicians, the Parks Dept., as well as all neighborhood and city media.

News Release

The following letter warns that the current ban on amplified music is really a blow against the "active use" philosophy popularized during the 70's and 80's.

The Central Park "dance skaters" are a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural group who have met each weekend for more than eighteen years. During this time, we have entertained over a million spectators, and in our own small, but continuous way helped change the negative preconceptions of tourists, many of whom came to New York expecting only racial intolerance and rampant crime.

We have also become a notable tourist attraction photographed and filmed constantly, and listed in many English and foreign language travel guides. Video/film crews have included our skaters in music videos, national commercials and even feature films, not to mention a constant litany of European, Asian and Canadian documentaries about Central Park. The faces of several of our skaters adorn tens of thousands of T-shirts in Europe.

We have even influenced some who struggle to understand New York's constantly changing sense of culture and community. At the end of their award winning book, *The People and the Park*, Rosenzweig & Blackmar concluded that the real beauty of Central Park is that to the culturally imaginative:

"it is possible to glimpse the city 'at its human best' and to think more about the possibilities than the limitations of a demographic public space. The park offers opportunities...for people to create new user-based friendships (for instance, running, chess, *or disco roller dancing*)...The park is a space to see people of varied backgrounds not as sociological categories...but as human beings. The creation of such an 'imagined community,' in which differences are respected and the equal rights of access affirmed, constitutes one precondition for a more democratic and humane society. Those who share a common space may come to share a common vision of the future."

It is certainly not coincidental that the authors choose to illustrate these laudatory ideals with a photograph of our skaters "roller dancing," for even to this day one would be hard pressed to find another, more visible example of a diverse collection of individuals coming together and creating a new powerful type of community, one based on *interests* rather than *background*.

Unfortunately, our brave little community is now imperiled. In early March 1995, however, local newspapers announced that amplified music would no longer be "tolerated" in Central Park. When the dance skaters' representatives met with the Parks and Police Departments on April 6, they were informed that there was no compromise on this issue and those skaters who wished to dance to anything but Walkman's could simply go to Wollman Rink.

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In response to this crisis, our skaters recently have banded together and formed the Central Park Dance Skaters' Association (CPDSA.) Utilizing our wealth of human resources and plying the legitimate avenues open to non-profit organizations we are currently proposing a series of intelligent solutions to the issues raised by the city.

Although our goal is to work cooperatively with the Parks and Police Departments to come to a mutually agreeable solution to the current difficulties, there is ever mounting evidence that, even stripped of our music, the city wants to completely disband the dance skaters (now equipped with Walkmans,) and ultimately rid the entire area of all bladers/skaters, whether they dance or not.

Rosenzweig & Blackmar concluded their work on the history of Central Park with the prediction that budgetary cuts in the 1990's would undermine the socially important "democratic" trends of the 70's and 80's. Unfortunately, we are now seeing the tell tale signs of just such a process. In recent years, the city has looked increasingly to private organizations for financial contributions to make up the short fall, thus affording these institutions greater influence in overall park policy. Among these are those who seek a return to Frederick Law Olmsted's original philosophy which can be distilled down into the modern expression: "Look, but don't touch!" These views traditionally have been most popular amongst those of substance in New York, while Central Park as "the big back yard of the city" has found a preponderance of its supporters amongst those of more modest means.

But surely, in this time of nearly universal contraction of social services and programs, it makes little sense to simultaneously eliminate or reduce spontaneous forms of recreations available at no cost to the city administration.

Hopefully, you will agree that these developments, though seemingly only affecting a small group within Central Park are indicative of a much broader trend, one that will ultimately effect a great many New Yorkers and their guests, and as such are of sufficient importance to warrant media coverage. In any case, thank you for your concern.

-- Brent Nosworthy, Official Spokesperson, dba CPDSA, Inc.

The View From Skaters Road

Out on Skaters Road we consider ourselves a family. Like any family, when things go wrong we want to know why and then we try to figure out how to fix the problem. When our music was silenced last month, there were many angry voices among us blaming one person or a group of our own people for the ban. While most of us feel that the ban on music is arbitrary and unfair, we must accept some of the blame. If we want the right to continue skating on Skaters Road, we must take responsibility for the actions of our group; you don't get something for nothing.

At the April 6 meeting with the Parks Department and police, representatives of the CPDSA were informed that we had not kept our part of the agreement made last year. They complained that several important rules had been

broken and argued that, because we didn't comply with every provision of the bargain, we had lost our right to play music. These violations were: sales of audio tapes, solicitation of "battery money" and playing music at too high a volume.

Last year a music permit was issued to a DJ who needed some way to be reimbursed for the time and effort of bringing out the system, producing tapes and paying for the investment in equipment. You can't expect someone to work for nothing, but the city won't allow the old solutions to continue. Park regulations severely restrict commercial use of the parks and we cannot expect to change those regulations. Clearly, there is a need for a new way of operating the music.

For now, we must do what every family does when under pressure from outsiders, join ranks to face the threat. United we are strong, divided we are weak.

The Central Park Skate Circle Lives! -- Bob Nichols

Excerpts From CPDSA Proposal

Proposed Solution

The problems and challenges engendered by the increasing popularity of roller skating/dancing on Dead Road have until now escaped permanent solution because there has been no organized body or group to address such issues on an *ongoing, systematic basis*.

Threatened with the permanent loss of music and possibly even extinction, a large group of responsible dance skaters have come together to form the *Central Park Dance Skaters Association (CPDSA)*, which filed for an incorporated status on April 25, 1995.

The CPDSA is a responsible group of citizens whose primary goal is to work together with the NYPD and Parks Department to devise and implement detailed, intelligent solutions to the types of problems that have cropped up in our area over the last several years.

To this end, the remainder of this document describes our recommendations on how to handle sound level, crowd control, proscribed activities issues, as well as a compliance mechanism that will maximize the successful implementation of any mutually agreed upon accord.

Sound Volume

Overall Goal

CPDSA has two objectives regarding sound volume, specifically, that it:

- ∑ does not intrude upon other areas of Central Park
- ∑ will be heard throughout the skater's skating surface and only a short distance into the crowd.

Both goals are easily obtainable through the selection of the appropriate stereo equipment and a reasonable approach to their use.

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Traditional Problems

“Obnoxious” sounds sometimes associated with Skaters’ Road during the last two years occurred because some of those who provided the music:

- ∑ “blasted” the sound into adjoining areas.
- ∑ employed “long throw” speakers.
- ∑ took no precautions to minimize “low frequency bleed.”
- ∑ employed little or no monitoring of sound levels.

General Solutions

The CPDSA proposes to solve the recent sound level problems that have arisen in Skaters’ Road using a multi-pronged approach.

Appropriate Sound Equipment: Stereo equipment is commercially available that will allow the CPDSA to model the sound to fit the skating surface’s requirements, yet not intrude even into immediately surrounding areas.

A distributed sound system with a number of small speaker enclosures will provide a far less obtrusive sound than traditional large “long throw” speaker systems.

These environmentally hardened speakers would be placed around the skating surface, facing inwards. The smaller enclosure size coupled with their elevated position above the ground would minimize the “low frequency bleed” commonly associated with larger stereo systems.

Monitoring of Sound Levels: The CPDSA will monitor our system’s sound levels a pre-agreed upon number of times each session. The CPDSA will purchase a Db meter and the readings will be conducted at the Skaters’ Circle and at several pre-agreed locations in the park.

More Reasonable Sound Policy: The CPDSA will seek only to provide adequate music for the skaters and the immediate onlookers. This translates into always keeping the volume down to a reasonable level, i.e., the sound does not permeate into other areas of the park.

Tapes Sales/Unauthorized Solicitation

In the past, amplified music was provided by individual music providers who purchased and maintained all stereo equipment at their own expense. Eventually, these individuals sought some method of remuneration to compensate for their investment and effort. This resulted in the unlicensed sales of audio tapes and/or public solicitation of money, neither of which can be condoned by the NYPD or the Parks Department.

The CPDSA is seeking to eliminate this abuse at its root and will raise all required moneys through normal fund raising methods at off-park sites, pursuant to the laws and guidelines for non profit corporations in New York state.

The CPDSA will undertake to:

- ∑ Purchase and maintain all stereo equipment required to provide music to its skate dancers at reasonable levels.

- ∑ Provide necessary funds required to operate the equipment, transport it into/out of the park and provide proper storage, thus removing the operator’s necessity of resorting to fringe activity to be compensated for one’s effort.
- ∑ Ensure that selling tapes or collecting money from the public will not be tolerated.

Compliance

Most skaters will voluntarily comply to any reasonable agreement between the Parks Department and the CPDSA. They recognize, after all, that continued dance skating to music is dependent upon cooperation between these two bodies and compliance to this agreement.

A return of music, however, inevitably will draw some who lack this spirit of cooperation and who will seek to indulge in proscribed activities, such as drinking beer: etc.

To minimize the problems, the CPDSA suggests the following action steps:

Skate Guards: The CPDSA will supply 3 to 5 volunteer skate guards each session. Their duty will be to ensure not only the skating safety, but also that there is total compliance throughout the surface in the skating circle.

Outreach Program: During each session, skate guards and other CPDSA staff will explain the terms of the agreement, and the reasons for compliance to members of its community.

Temporary Signage: The Parks Department will supply the CPDSA with ten (10) 8 1/2” x 11” laminated “rules of conduct.” These will be posted in several prominent places in and near the rink during the session.

Ongoing Educational Program: Utilizing its newsletter and other printed materials, the CPDSA will explain the type of activity/behavior that must be avoided, as well as the consequences of non-compliance to the entire group.

Temporary Stoppage of Music: Experience has repeatedly demonstrated that the withdrawal of music is an effective means of communicating the necessity of avoiding proscribed activities. In the event of any signs Central Park Conservancy of significant lack of compliance among the skaters, the CPDSA itself will shut off the music until the offensive activity stops.

Sound Monitoring: Equipment with a Db meter, the CPDSA, will periodically monitor sound levels as described in a previous section.

Problem Protocol: The NYPD and Parks Dept. will identify the types of problems that can occur in our area. Action including the steps to be taken by the CPDSA will be clearly defined in each case, such as, what to do in a skating injury, etc.

Lines of Communication: The CPDSA will be supplied with the names and phone numbers of officials they can contact during a session, if this is warranted by circumstances. In turn, the CPDSA

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will supply both the NYPD and Parks Dept with the names of three key members on its committee. Any problems requiring immediate attention will be directed to one or more of these individuals.

Periodic Review: The CPDSA will meet with the NYPD and the Parks Department periodically to discuss compliance issues during the immediately preceding period, as well as any other types of problems that can be reasonably expected for the upcoming period.

Fax Numbers

Central Park Conservancy: Elizabeth Barlow Rogers

Fax (212) - 315-0869

Central Park Precinct: Captain William Bayer
Transverse Rd & 86th Street, NY NY 10024

Fax: (212) - 570-2864

Police Dept Community Affairs

One Police Plaza, NY NY 10038

Fax: (212) - 732-3965

Henry Stern, Commissioner, Parks Dept.

Fax: (212) - 360-1345

Park & Recreation Dept Public Relations

830 Fifth Avenue, NY NY 10021

Fax: (212) - 360-1324

Official CPDSA Contacts:

If you are interested in helping us, please let us know.

All inquiries should be directed to:

Brent Nosworthy (718) 797-0592

Lezly Ziering: (212) 777-3232

Bob Nichols (212) 246-1344

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