



## **OSSEO-MAPLE GROVE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION**

### **Special OMGHA Meeting Notes from April 21, 2014**

Mr. Braasch stood up and shared that he would be moderating the Realignment of Boundaries discussion. He reviewed the format of the discussion and asked that everyone be civilized and respectful. Mr. Ross will have 15 minutes to present his side and the Board will respond. Afterwards Mr. Braasch would accept questions from the floor—keeping in mind that it needed to be a question and not disrespectful or a statement.

Question came from the floor about why did Board decided to have discussion. Mr. Braasch stated it would be answered during question and answer portion of the discussion.

Mr. Ross—15 minutes

Mr. Ross stated that the Proposal brought to the Board in October. He then stopped and gave bit of history about himself--lives in Maple Grove, 3 kids. Coached hockey, football and baseball. Been on OMGHA Board-- was on Ice Arena Task Force, and accomplished other things while on Board.

Mr. Ross went on about the proposal—stating that both high schools have good programs—Mr. Ross does care what happens to our youth base sport programs. Mr. Ross believes in youth athletics. Community Youth foundations should be run by those with kids in public schools. Mr. Ross stated that he has heard the Board had a proposal to rebrand to OMGHA as Maple Grove Hockey. Mr. Ross then read his realignment proposal that was passed out the meeting. He then made a statement that Osseo his only program in the state that comes out of 2 youth hockey associations. In proposal—these 2 associations would align with their high schools. Each could run traveling programs as they see fit. Mr. Ross sees realignment as way to stabilized youth hockey for all youth hockey players in district 279. There would be a transition process—so would take place over time so that kids can continue with association they started with at the traveling level. Financial strength of OMGHA could be used to help other kids playing hockey. High School Coaches find it hard to work with current association. Mr. Ross noted that Private schools can recruit and Public cannot. Merger would provide 6 ice rinks—more ice for kids to use. Mr. Ross could work around families driving further than they do now for practice. District 3 has been supportive of the possibilities. Not curing cancer here—can be decided in a short amount of time. Mr. Ross would like to set up a task force to answer the questions—if this were to happen, what it would look like. Mr. Ross would suggest that Todd Elmer of District 3 would be Chair of this task force. Mr. Ross asked Mr. Starkey to come up and talk about proposal—Mr. Starkey came up and spoke about his position on the proposal. He is completely in favor of looking at proposal or a merge. Feels this is should not have been the first time to bring proposal up--should have happened a year ago behind closed doors. Be that as it may—none of the 3 Coaches are here to banish any kids in any association. They (the Coaches) are all in different stages in their programs. Coach Starkey is willing to bet that most in the room did not know that Park Center no longer has a hockey program. Hard for the Coaches within the Association as far as recruitment—they do not know which players will go to which high school. Would like to see more brand recognition within the Association. Mr. Starkey feels that OMGHA is a feeder system—want to build loyalty starting at a young age. Coach Starkey would be opposed to rebranding—not fair to Osseo side of current association.

OMGHA Board--15 mins – Passed on use, giving more time for questions.

President Smith stated that the Board is not anti-split. Both measures brought to the board were not mergers—and did not pass. Mr. Smith made this brief statement and then turned it over to questions from the floor.

Question from the floor—why did it take a year to get the conversation to the membership?

Answer—from Mr. Smith--it was filed as a grievance, Board cannot discuss grievance and that was just resolved on Saturday 4/19 at 11pm. There was a meeting to discuss in January and now to discuss proposals, and there has also been a lot of discussion within the Board.

Question—is North Metro for this?

Answer—from Mr. Ross--they are open for discussion as long as it stabilizes hockey

Answer – from Mr. Braasch – we are not going to speculate, and unless you have a real merger plan to discuss it is to vague to guess.

Question—what if district 279 changes boundaries.

Answer from Mr. Ross--good question, Mr. Ross has had discussions with superintendent of school district—nothing will be done until open enrollment period is done. OMGHA does feel that 279 realignment to would be a risk to OMGHA. Mr. Braasch stated because hockey would have no control. Mr. Ross feels that it would only give numbers to

the “weaker” side—Osseo. Mr. Braasch reminds everyone that these numbers are based on High School boundaries not on Jr. High or Elementary attendance.

Question about girls program—would this leave this program divided and not enough to field a team on either side.

Answer-- Mr. Ross—feels that the issues for girls program goes beyond this proposal. He feels this is a State issue—and need more girls to play hockey. North Metro already merges with Armstrong. He guarantees if he had \$100,000 he would bring in more numbers guaranteed or he'll move to Wayzata. Would need to look at things by level...need to figure out how to get more girls to play and make it better. Does not have a good answer.

Question—about ice time.

Answer from Mr. Ross-- North Metro has first right at 2 sheets Brooklyn Park—then the rest can be rented out. Mr. Smith commented that Luke Johnson is looking at available ice time currently in use at each level and OMGHA is looking at purchasing ice from Brooklyn Park.

Question—Person asking question is trying to figure this out—why is the first thing brought up when introducing this proposal is talking about private schools.

Answer from Mr. Ross—he feels that if your child goes to be private school, you do not have a vested interest in youth athletics.

Coach Wiley then stood up and spoke—all of the Osseo Hockey Staff played for OMGHA—even Coach Starkey played with several of them for OMGHA. It has been a tough last couple of years for Osseo HS Hockey. He is here tonight to see what all the options are, and has not taken sides, this is why he was not standing up front.

Question to Coach Wiley—are there kids who are trying out who do not have the skills needed to play HS hockey? If they have the skills are there enough to play for his program.

Answer--Coach addressed that there are 1,000 to pick from they cut 8-9 players last year. He also stated that they are just hockey guys who would like to have hockey conversations

Question—does North Metro have debt

Answer--Mr. Ross—no; OMGHA – Mr. Braasch states this is not for us to disclose.

Question to Coach Wiley—there are several players who are aligned to go to Osseo but play for Coach Starkey at Maple Grove.

Answer from Coach Wiley—he feels that the proposal could be a long term solution...not a quick fix. Kid playing with Osseo kids more likely want to stay and play with other Osseo kids.

Coach Wiley furthered his statement that he sees great things going on with OMGHA. As he and his Assistant Coaches go to practices etc., it is tough to not know what high school certain kids will go to...it would be easier if they knew that all Bantam A team is going to one High School.

Question—doesn't understand conversation of split--why so many hoops for 5% of the population that will play high school hockey. Why wouldn't we support a merger as one unified front?

Answer--Mr. Braasch would support the merger if it was the right things to do...keep discussions open. Mr. Starkey addressed by saying what we have in MN is very unique. Other states you play club hockey...we are lucky to have associations. Generally the associations are aligned with one High School. Mr. Starkey states he would be opposed one big association if the merger occurred, and would only support it should teams separate.

Question—what is the percentage of kids in the association will actually play high school hockey?

Answer--Mr. Braasch—10-15 new incoming sophomores each year—and Mr. Hicks agreed from the floor

Question about Edina and other Associations---did everyone play in their association they were assigned to by boundaries?

Answer-- Mr. Ross addressed that hockey boundaries are my high school...per MN hockey. We are 120-140% larger than any other association in the state and 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> in participation. Have to measure based on how many kids actually play. Mr. Braasch applauds our recruiting efforts with our schools and disagrees with Mr. Ross's opinion that we are below average.

Question—what would be different than how the Association would be split as it was 4-5 years ago...how would it be different?

Answer from Mr. Ross-- Osseo only high school in the state to have two associations filing into the high school. There was a lot of complexity to that decisions...Mr. Braasch encourages those to go back and read the minutes from the past years when OMGHA decided to merge the traveling programs rather than keeping them separate. It was not good.

Mr. Braasch states we are out of time, and thanked everyone for coming. OMGHA will have several discussions going forward. Mr. Braasch also thanked Mr. Ross for coming and High Schools Coaches for coming as well.