



Hello Woodbury Hockey Families,

Our board members are committed to providing you timely updates on the various initiatives we are leading. In the next week or two, you will receive our first newsletter.

In the meantime, I want to update you on a couple key topics.

### **Additional Bielenberg Ice**

One of our strategic priorities is to grow the interest in youth hockey by being able to provide a more accessible and affordable experience for our younger players. Working with city officials, we explored a proposal to install a canopy over the outdoor ice at the Bielenberg Sports Center. Given the significant time and resources the city has already invested in the Bielenberg Sports Center and the popularity of the outdoor rink for pleasure skating, there is no interest in making significant changes or investments to the Bielenberg Sports Center. The City does however have plans to enhance the Ojibway Park area, adjacent to Woodbury High School, in the 2017/18 timeframe to provide better balance for recreational opportunities in the community. Some of the improvements that have been discussed are replacement of the 45 year old park building and the addition of a major amenity, which could include changes to the existing outdoor rink or the development of some other feature.

For our association, we believe a canopy option on an outdoor rink will give us more flexibility in ice scheduling to keep more of our players in Woodbury and give us the home-ice advantage in our recruitment and retention efforts for our new families. One way for us to improve our competitiveness is by attracting new players to our introductory programs and convenience is a factor. Going forward, we will be included in the Ojibway Park planning process by being asked to share our ideas and needs, and we will continue to work on options that help us expand the interest in youth hockey.

### **Association Model**

When I first shared I was interested in running for the President of WAHC, I learned there was an outside group exploring the possibility of separate youth hockey programs to serve our East Ridge High School boundary and Woodbury High School boundary youths. I believe it is in the best interest of our membership that the WAHC board not only join in but lead these discussions in order to make the right decision for all our players and families. WAHC is a community based hockey program. Our players who go on to play high school hockey, not only play for ERHS and WHS but many will play at our neighboring private schools (including Cretin, Hill Murray, St. Paul Academy and St. Thomas Academy). A change in the association model will directly impact all our youth.

Some key points:

- The **WAHC board will lead**/facilitate this process with Wes Bolin, WHS Boys Hockey Head Coach and Dustin Vogelgesang, ERHS Boys Hockey Associate Coach as part of the working team. We have also asked Tom Kulenkamp, ERHS Girls Hockey Head Coach and Chris Lepper, WHS Girls Hockey Head Coach to join the discussion.
- We are **committed to having one association** and this process will help us to determine if we have 1 or 2 programs within the association; we are not considering splitting into separate associations.
- We are in the beginning stages – determining the best method to explore the options. This will take time. We are not creating separate programs for the 2016-2017 season
- We are **committed to hearing your opinion** in the process. We will utilize tryout informational sessions or other in-person meetings to educate on the pros and cons regarding a 2 program model prior to a survey of our members.
- The ability to best **develop our players' skills will be the priority in the decision.**

We are excited about the progress we're going to make this year. Thank you for being part of our association.

Sincerely,

*Pat Sondreal*

President

Woodbury Area Hockey Club

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