

**Helena Area Youth Hockey Association
Board Meeting Minutes
February 20, 2020
5:30 p.m. Helena Ice Arena**

HAYHA Board Members:

Kurt Moser – President and PeeWee Rep
Ryan Lilletvedt – Vice President and Bantam Rep
Mekell Lybbert – MAHA Rep
Lance Wilson – Registrar
Allison Riddle – 8U Rep
Darryl James – Squirt Rep
Jon Flynn – House Rep
Scott Petersen – Member at Large / SafeSport Coordinator
Sarah Garcia – Treasurer and High School Rep
Judy Merickel –Secretary and 8U Rep

Absent Board Members:

Randy Boysen – Member at Large / Program Development (Girls and Goalies)

Guests:

Brad Frazier – Ref, Termite Parent, Squirt A Parent
Jessica Butler – Termite Parent, Termite Manager, Squirt A Parent, 2010 birth year
Squirt B Parent
Shannon McKechnie – 2010 birth year Squirt House Parent

Meeting Called to Order 5:37 p.m.

Minutes

Mekell had a change to the minutes. She asked that the air quality monitoring position be removed from “next meeting items” since the project was completed during the meeting. Scott Petersen will be the air quality monitor and Mekell provided job description. Lance moved that the minutes be passed with that change. Mekell seconded. Motion passes.

Public Comment

Jessica Butler provided the following comments on MAHA’s Squirt Half-Ice decision. She read all the articles provided by Mekell. She reported what stood out to her:

1. In each of these cases there were paid professionals and high-level coaches implementing the half-ice transition.
2. Every program that implemented the half-ice did it slowly over transitional years.
3. Every program had more ice time than we do.
4. She is concerned about the lack of calls by referees and now putting these kids in a tighter space might lead to more penalty behavior.

Shannon McKechnie read aloud her husband's letter to board:

I'll be on the ice when the meeting takes place but I'm on board with keeping full ice for those that have already been playing full ice, learning offsides etc. Makes no sense to go back to half.

While there are some advantages to playing smaller area games, I think now that this group has already transitioned to full ice, going back to half ice next season would be taking a step backwards.

*Some other considerations if it goes full ice for 2010 but half ice for 2011s
How does that work for tryouts, those age groups playing together at all even though in the same division... there would have to be a clear split which I don't know if that's the right thing either.*

*I would prefer to just leave it at full ice for squirt. Period.
That's my 2 cents*

On a different topic...I would be ok with doing away with tryouts for Squirt level. It's a lot of pressure and most of them, whether they are at A, B or house level, aren't ready for that kind of pressure at that age, as I think many parents have witnessed firsthand.

Thanks,

Perry

Judy read aloud Beau Downing's letter to the board, which is cut and pasted here:

January 28, 2020

Darryl James 10U Squirt Representative
Helena Area Youth Hockey Association

Re: A proposed 10U full ice to half ice transition period

Dear Darryl,

I am writing to express my concern about the Montana Amateur Hockey Association's (MAHA) decision to transition 10U Squirt Level hockey from full ice play to half ice play without an appropriate plan for transitioning those 2010 birthyear players. These 2010 "gap year" players will have played full ice hockey in season 2019-2020 and must transition back to half ice in the 2020-2021 season. While I support the American Development Model created by USA Hockey, I think that those 2010 players should be afforded the opportunity to continue playing full ice in the 2020-2021 season. As such I would propose a solution that could be presented to other youth hockey associations and to MAHA so that an efficient and effective transition period can occur. My proposed plan allows for the 2011 birthyear players to enter the 10U Squirt level as half ice players, therefore creating a seamless and natural transition to half ice play at the Squirt level. My proposed transition plan is outlined below:

1. Allow youth hockey associations to roster a "Squirt A" or "2010 Squirt Transition Team" that remains full ice. Only players with a birthyear of 2010 would be allowed to participate in full ice play so that adherence to the new rule adopted by MAHA carries the full force and effect for those players with 2011 birthdays.
2. Require those youth hockey associations to roster "Squirt B" or "Squirt Half Ice Transition Team" with those players born in 2011 or players born in 2010 that do not wish to participate in the full ice team (or that do not qualify through the normal tryout process).
3. Allow all youth hockey associations to roster half ice squirt teams if they do not wish to participate in the full ice program or lack the number of 2010 birthyear players to roster a full ice team.

I anticipate that those programs already rostering a "Squirt A" team would be interested in such a transition period for their 2010 birthyear players. Since the league play structure is already established it should be easy to make such a transition league possible.

I would encourage you to provide my input to the Helena Area Youth Hockey Association (HAYHA) Board of Directors. Since this would require direct coordination with MAHA I have copied the HAYHA – MAHA Representative on this letter. I am also copying Coach in Chief Shawn Schroeder. I look forward to working with you to establish an efficient transition plan for the 2010 birthyear players.

Sincerely,



Beau Downing
10U Squirt B Assistant Coach
Hockey Parent

Cc: Mekell Lybbert
Shawn Schroeder

Moment of Silence in Memory of T.H.

After a moment of silence, the board discussed having a list of resources available on the HAYHA website for coaches, managers and parents to reference when trying to help a player who may be suicidal. Also passing along future training opportunities to coaches, managers and parents.

Shawn reported that Craig Struble, a counselor from Intermountain, came to the first Bantam practice following the tragedy. Thank you to Jon Flynn for asking Craig to come. It was a good meeting with all parents and players. Craig left business cards for kids or parents to call him if they ever needed to talk.

Ice Rink

No update from Stan or Brandon.

Coach-in-Chief Update – Shawn Schroeder

The committee met regarding non-parent coach reimbursements. They will share their recommendations at the next board meeting.

SafeSport Update – Scott Petersen

Scott reported his carbon monoxide air quality findings. He tested five times at the Helena Ice Arena, on five different nights. There were different outside conditions such as temperature and wind. The highest reading he recorded was a three. A reading of 20 or less is considered safe. Every reading he took during Zamboni operation he had a 0 or negative reading. The highest reading he could generate himself was from a personal propane heater, like the ones many parents have with them in the stands, and that was a 21.

Jon Flynn asked about a First Aid Kit. Mekell said there was one in the skate rental room and there is also one in the equipment room. The board decided to take the equipment room one and put it in the box where pucks and water bottles are kept so that all coaches and managers can access it if needed. Jon also asked about an AED Unit. The board reminded everyone there is one on the wall in the lobby right next to the stairwell. It was donated by American Chemet a couple years ago. Shawn Schroeder will send a message to all coaches letting them know about the first aid kit in the puck and water bottle box and also telling them where the AED unit is located.

Kurt warned board members about the poking metal pieces on the players' benches. They will pop water bottles when water bottles are set next to them.

Visioning

Lance passed around Excel spreadsheet of all HAYHA players divided by birth year so the board could see estimated numbers for next season. Numbers are as follows. These numbers include

house and travel team combined. They also have some players who only play during the Friday girl practices, which are noted.

- High School Seniors (2001 and 2002 birth years) – 5
- Remaining 2002, 2003, 2004 birth year high school players – 18 (includes two players who are girls program only)
- 2005 birth year second year bantams – 10
- 2006 birth year first year bantams – 10 (includes 1 girls program only player)
- 2007 birth year second year peewees – 18 (includes 1 girls program only player)
- 2008 birth year first year peewees – 20 (includes 1 girls program only player)
- 2009 birth year second year squirts – 33 (includes 4 girls program only players)
- 2010 birth year first year squirts – 26
- 2011 birth year last year of U8 – 32 (includes 1 girls only player)
- 2012 birth year U8 – 29 (includes 1 girls only player)
- 2013 birth year U8 – 22
- 2014 birth year U8 – 20
- 2015 birth year U8 – 12
- 2016 birth year U8 – 2 second session only

The Visioning Committee had a great meeting with Stan Senechal, Rink Manager.

Division Updates

8U: The tournament went well, and we raised \$4,200 for HAYHA. Judy will ask Bob to block off the first weekend in February for next year's U8 State Tournament since we were awarded to host it for two years. Helena Mites are sending two teams to the Spokane Tournament. We are bringing four Missoula kids with us to fill out the rosters. We also brought two Havre players and one Bozeman player to Lethbridge Tournament this year.

House: Jon reports the house league is going to Billings Tournament this weekend. They are having their home tournament here March 7 and 8. Jon and the board tried to solve some issues with the home house tournament.

Squirt A and B: Lance reported that the A team is in second place behind Missoula. The kids are playing well together. Darryl reported the Squirt B Team is in second place behind Butte. State is February 29 – 30.

Peewees: Kurt said both teams are at about 500 going into the state tournament March 6-8th. The A tournament is in Billings and the B and C is in Missoula.

Bantams: Ryan reported the bantams are in 4th place. They have six more league games, four of them this weekend at home. They had a great scrimmage with the high school team last week. Scott Petersen said the High School players were such great sports and it was a fun game for all.

High School: The High School team is in second place. They still have 11 fair play points, which Sarah is proud of and so are the coaches. They won the Salmon Tournament and the Great

Falls Tournament. Senior Night is February 29th at 7 p.m. at the Helena Ice Arena. State Tournament is March 6-8.

Girls and Goalies: Randy was not at the meeting, but Lance said 6-9 goalies continuously show up for the Monday morning training sessions. They are requesting Wednesday mornings next season due to long travel weekends; early Wednesday practice would be much easier than an early Monday practice. Lance is also looking at putting together a weeklong goalie camp in August/September with Peter Budaj from Bozeman who is a former NHL goalie.

House Program Expansion – Jon Flynn

After discussing the numbers Lance provided and the fact that house program had to turn away a handful of bantam age players during registration this fall, the board decided to expand house next season by creating two house practice groups, just like we have two U8 groups – Group 1 and Group 2. Coaches would divide kids into those groups based on ability, with group 1 predominantly 10U/12U/14U and group 2 predominantly 12U/14U/HS. Group 1 would have home scrimmages plus several travel tournament options and a home tournament. Group 2 would have home scrimmages, but we wouldn't be able to guarantee them any travel options. However, Jon stated that house programs are growing across the state and there is a chance there might be some travel options for the older house group if they combine with other cities. HAYHA will need two extra hours of ice time for Group 2. Ryan volunteered to put together some practice schedule options for next season. The board will continue to discuss house expansion and next season's practice schedule at the March meeting.

Squirt Half-Ice for 2020-2021 Season

Mekell reminded the board that MAHA voted last May for squirts to be half-ice in the 2020-21 season. She said herself and Missoula were the only ones who voted against it. All other cities voted for it and it passed. She brought the idea of a transitional year to MAHA committee and board and no one was willing to do a transitional year (allowing 2010s to play full-ice and 2011s to do half-ice); therefore, all squirts will play half-ice next season. Kurt said he called Mike McIntosh, President of MAHA, and received the same answer – half-ice for all squirts next season. According to Kurt and Mekell, MAHA's decision is final and they are not willing to look at transition year for 2010s.

Darryl, Allison and Judy, all of whom are parents' of 2010 kids, expressed the desire to push MAHA to offer a transitional year for the 2010s. Judy said the 2010s have already played a full season of full-ice hockey. They have learned off-sides, icing, breaking out of the zone and positional specific play in full-ice hockey. Going back to a season of half-ice is regression for the 2010s. The shooters have learned to shoot top shelf on full size nets and now going back to mite size nets is regression. She said she has no problem with changing squirts to half-ice hockey, and believes in the benefits of small area games, but this can be done with respect to where the 2010 players are at developmentally, by allowing the Squirt A Team to be full-ice

next season and two B teams would play half-ice. The board could choose to do tryouts or not do tryouts. That can be decided later.

Judy shared that she spoke with the Billings head Mite coach, who is also a squirt coach and on the Billings board. The Billings coach said they were pressured by MAHA to do half-ice this year since they were the only place in the state that already had the boards. He was reluctant but has seen the benefits of the ADM practices, he was not sure yet on the benefits of the half-ice games. Judy said HAYHA already does ADM practices and has been for several years, so we are already doing the right thing developmentally at practices but is still not convinced the 2010s need to go back to half-ice games next season. Mekell challenged with “that is not true” regarding what the Billings coach said. There was a long discussion among the board about other programs in the state and what their 2010 parents may be considering, including the option to have the 2010s not play within MAHA’s Treasure State League next season to avoid being forced into half-ice games.

Allison expressed that she has faith in USA Hockey but questions why MAHA is out ahead of them with this transition. USA Hockey will not be passing this rule change and implementation until the 2021-2022 season. It also feels like MAHA is not listening to the concerns of the 2010 families, many who are upset with this decision and don’t feel like it recognizes the awkward development position it puts our 2010 kids in. Allison has spoken with Bozeman 2010 families and they are not happy. She has also spoken with Butte families who are not happy.

Darryl said he has read all the articles Mekell sent and all the research out there that he could find and feels it isn’t strong enough to support a full transition 10U half-ice hockey in the upcoming season. He feels MAHA did a poor job communicating with its members through this process and this breakdown of communication has led many families with 2010 players to be upset across the state, some of whom are also sending letters to MAHA requesting a transitional year for the 2010 players. That transitional year plan may include a hybrid approach where both half-ice and full-ice games are played. When asked why MAHA turned down the idea of 2010 transitional year, Mekell explained that not every program could put an all 2010 player team on the ice next year, so that approach doesn’t work for everyone, specifically naming smaller communities in Montana who could now put a squirt team together for half-ice but never had enough kids to put full-ice size squirt teams together (Red Lodge, etc.). Kurt said there could be any number of transition proposals, and it was too difficult to determine what a final proposal might look like. Kurt questioned spending all this time discussing when MAHA has already said no and there doesn’t seem to be a consensus on a plan. Darryl suggested that we wait and see what the parent group came up with, but the Board shouldn’t close the door on the discussion.

The discussion was long. Attempting to see a way through this, Sarah Garcia asked the board if there was still a window to influence MAHA could Mekell push for this transitional idea for the

2010 families. Kurt stated that if we wanted to advance a transition proposal to MAHA on behalf of HAYHA, the Board would have to vote on such a proposal. I stated this after Sarah made her suggestion. Kurt and Mekell said it's already been brought to MAHA by Mekell and the answer was no.

The board asked Coach-in-Chief, Shawn Schroeder, for his input on the awkwardness for the 2010 players. Shawn does not feel the 2010s will regress developmentally. He feels the research is strong enough that small area games increase puck touches, one-on-one, tight space movements, passing and shooting. He referenced the fact that most upper division coaches spend a large part of practices or in his case, one whole bantam practice, on small area games because of the developmental benefit they provide. He feels going back to mite size nets (intermediate size nets) is most appropriate for goalie development at the U10 age.

Judy suggested the board talk through MAHAs proposed rules that Mekell emailed to the board today. These rules are something that we can still provide input on as they won't be voted on until MAHA's annual meeting in May. The board agreed and Coach-in-Chief led a discussion through MAHA's proposed half-ice rules. After going rule by rule, page by page, Mekell recorded the changes that the HAYHA board would like to see and is bringing them back to the MAHA committee. These changes include two-minute instead of one-minute penalties. Also, having a four-foot-high net installed over the half-ice boards to prevent flying pucks from one game injuring players or coaches in the other game.

A committee consisting of Darryl, Jon, Judy, Shawn and Mekell will get together to form recommendations for team sizes and team numbers for Squirt Travel next season. Preliminarily discussed having one A team and two B teams, each 9 – 11 kids, for maximum playing time in half-ice games. Committee needs to debate size to determine 9, 10 or 11 kids. Committee will also talk through process for rostering 1 full-ice tournament A team and 1 full-ice tournament B team as USA Hockey will still sanction full-ice squirt tournaments next season and MAHA expects there will be a number of those for the squirts to attend.

MAHA – Mekell

MAHA monthly meeting was held February 18th. Here are the notes Mekell emailed to the board following the meeting:

- Moment of silence by Board taken to recognize recent loss of Helena player. Was informed that all MAHA/TSL State Tournaments this year will have a moment of silence also.
- Officials - President, TSL Commissioner, & Ref In Chief reported that this past year (2019/2020 season) Montana has had a **47% ref turnover**, and lost a significant amount of refs. Extremely concerning. Montana does not have as many hockey players as many States, and so the pool to pull officials from is already lower than most, and with this turnover rate (losing almost half) they are very concerned. They indicated that abuse of refs these past few years has contributed to high turnover of refs Nationwide. Reported by many districts & USAH.
- **Game Misconduct Penalties - Our TSL has had "76" game misconduct penalties this year alone (as of Feb. 16). Almost double from last year. 25 of them have been in direct relation to abuse of refs**, and many have been at younger age levels than previously seen. Have

occurred at all levels 10U through High School. **This past Sunday (February 16th), in one day alone there were 9 game incident reports submitted to MAHA/TSL.** 2 were match. 1 was for assault on official. Very concerning. Currently being reviewed by the district. Many also revolve around improper behavior by coaches. Coaches need to understand that players often follow coaches lead, and when it's ok for coaches to abuse officials, it often carries on with players. This behavior much change and should start with the Coaches ASAP! We are asked to remind our local Coach in Chief / Coaches of expectations prior to State and should discuss locally any that have occurred by our coaches.

- MAHA Ref in Chief has recently printed posters that are being mailed to all rinks this week regarding this topic. Please follow up to make sure all associations/rinks receive and make sure these are placed in visible areas (2).
- TSL Commissioner is going to draft an email and send to all players/members reminding them that inappropriate behavior is not acceptable. Associations should remind parents, players, & coaches of Code of Conduct forms they signed at the beginning of the season. Also asks that when we receive this, that we forward it onto all our members as we need multiple reminders going out notifying members that inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated at State tournaments.
- Player Development weekend coming up next month. Information on MAHA's website regarding. We need to begin getting the word out to our local associations. Will generally follow same format as last year. Being hosted in Bozeman. Trying to do a later starting time Friday to reduce school absences. There should be something mailed out by Coach In Chief regarding this in the upcoming week. Also for players who can't make it who are currently playing out of state, coaches need to notify them that players wanting to be considered need to fill out waiver (on MAHA website).
- Ref In Chief has been scheduling officials including traveling for upcoming State tournaments.
- State Tournaments - Due to the high number of B teams in the 10U & 12U leagues this year, state tournament teams in B league will be split into B & C leagues for State Tournaments. This has been done based on their rank/general ability. TSL Commissioner reports that this will help with good competitive hockey - best for development and retention of kids.
- Last yr a cold weather policy was passed at annual meeting. Was discussed that at this year's annual meeting they will write a warm weather policy to add to handbook that pertains to outdoor rinks, as there have been some issues with outdoor rinks this year because of the mild winter.
- All were asked to remind Associations & parents that these are **KIDS** playing hockey! As we near the end of the season, tensions and inappropriate behavior often occurs, and we need to remind parents that these are kids...we need to calm down and put everything into perspective. Everyone is a volunteer and doing their best at State Tournaments. Local & MAHA Tournament directors are doing their best & work incredibly hard. Instead of complaining, we are reminded to focus on all the hard work and the positives that are being done. **Primary focus remains that "kids" are having fun!**
- Reminded that everyone should be reviewing the USAH rule book & reffing book, as many of the issues and questions that are emailed in, are answered in these. Commissioners are instructed to go straight to the rule book, and by local associations doing so, MAHA believes that many of the issues will go away. This book can be found online. Reminded that many of the issues that are being submitted to MAHA should not be, and that they should be addressed at the local level first. We should be going to our local Coach In Chief and Ref In Chief first to discuss & review.
- Scholarship - MAHA Executive Board & Scholarship Committee are currently reviewing applications received. There will be 2 High School Scholarships awarded in next few weeks - 1 for female, 1 for male.
- Discussed 10U half ice draft proposal that was submitted by MAHA subcommittee. Kalispell would like some regional play wording added (certain number of games would be within certain distance or closer. Being reviewed). The rules will be voted on at the Annual Meeting, so if associations have input, those need to be submitted to subcommittee over the next few weeks. Draft reviewed with all associations on call (draft was previously emailed out to all MAHA Board). Reminder that the main focus is skill development and grow the game at this age. This is a USAH

Sanctioned league with appropriate refs as discussed with Ref In Chief. (Draft attached). ADM Rep discussed on call - supports this draft.

- Background screenings discussed. MAHA working with USAH on options for this next season due to the rate increase. USAH wants ready to go by April 1st. Some options are currently being reviewed.
- MAHA President trying out new USAH event scheduling appt.
- MAHA Annual meeting will be May 16th in Butte at Comfort Inn, beginning at 9:30. (all day)

Treasurer – Sarah Garcia

\$127,508.09 in HAYHA checking account. The board will implement the Failure to Pay Policy on a family who still has an outstanding balance. The family will receive another letter from Sarah referencing the Failure to Pay Policy, they will be sent to collections and will not be allowed to register next season unless their balance is paid in full.

Other Business

The board discussed purchasing an \$800 water bottle filling fountain for the Helena Ice Arena. This will help coaches, managers, parents and players fill water bottles. Ryan moved and Darryl seconded. Motion passes.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 18th 5:30 p.m.

Items for Next Meeting:

- Squirt Half-Ice committee recommendations
- House program expansion
- Practice Schedule for next season
- Result of Failure to Pay and Collections Letter to family with outstanding balance
- Committee recommendation on non-parent coach reimbursements
- Visioning committee follow-up

Meeting Adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

Signed by President: _____ Date: _____

Signed by Secretary: _____ Date: _____