

Mr. Mayor –

I attended the City Council Meeting on 02.08.2023.

I was surprised by a number of things I quietly observed.

First, the overwhelming presence and support from the ice sports community. This group of recreational ice skaters, figure skaters, hockey players and curlers - across all groups and ages – have truly formed a community and are an asset for the city different. Their unity is impressive.

The second thing I observed was the apparent look of surprise from you and some councilors when several crucial topics were raised by those who spoke at the microphone.

Third, I myself was very surprised by what appears to be a lack of transparency in the process of decision making. When public funds are used to support a private enterprise, alarms go off. No public hearings? No community input prior to the decision to commit the city and resources? No prior notice to the ice sports community of an agreement and announcement? Has the city looked into the franchisee? Have Mr. Fresquez and his claims been fully vetted? As you probably know by now, many of these points and concerns are appearing in reporting, editorials and letters to the editor in the Santa Fe New Mexican.

Both my wife and I have worked in professional hockey game day activity. My wife at the Met Center in Bloomington, MN for the Minnesota North Stars – she was involved for years in game day and special event production. I was an off ice NHL official at the XCEL Energy Center in St. Paul, MN working Minnesota Wild games.

Both of these facilities were specifically designed with alternative use in mind. When the team would leave for a road trip, the facility was often booked for other events. We have both witnessed many times what it takes to turn a building for non-ice events. As a result, we were shocked when we read the City/Soccer team information describing what it would take to turn the building. The scope of these activities is seriously underestimated. We both know from experience that a much larger crew working with specialized equipment, and years of training and hands on experience would NOT be able to accomplish what you are expecting. The timeframes that have been disclosed seem unrealistic, assuming the turns are done correctly. Who has determined that the GCCC is actual well suited for this activity and meets the league requirements?

In addition, both of these aforementioned buildings were designed to handle the additional weight of the coverings and equipment required. If the concrete base was not originally engineered to handle the significant increased weight on the surface, cracking of the concrete and damage to the refrigeration system could cost the City \$10's of thousands in repair costs, if not more. Has an engineering study been done to determine the structural capability of the surface? Was this type of activity included in the design criteria? Will the franchisee cover any and all damage to the facility?

Through my 40+ year career in IT, I have worked for several midsize IT companies and started two of my own companies. As an entrepreneur and small business owner, I wonder what the business plan and financial plans for this franchise look like? Is the franchisee financially capable of providing sufficient funding for continuing operations? Has an in-depth business plan been presented to the City? Is it available for review? Why the request for significant City funding?

Have the following items been addressed by the city and the franchisee:

P&L projections with specific description of revenue sources and expenses? What are the best case and worst case cash flow scenarios? Ticket sales, concessions, merchandise, labor, technology, staffing, repairs etc.

Game day requirements:

Have the Fire Marshall / Fire Chief and Police Chief been included in planning and are they prepared? Are Fire and rescue available and/or required? Police / Security services? Will Paramedics be standing by? Costs and who pays them? Apparently, the franchisee expects to fill the seats beyond approved capacity, how will that be handled? Parking? Are there other Public Safety Impacts? Traffic on Rodeo Road?

When does the clock start and stop for arena rental and at what hourly rate?

Staffing? What staffing will be required to convert the arena for soccer and to fully restore it to the original configuration? Arena staff and outside staff? Who provides staff for the concession stand? Does the community center have staff qualified to provide any security? Ticket sales – who handles ticket sales on site and verifying online sales? What devices and technology are required and who pays for this technology? Who pays to clean the facility post game including stands, bathrooms, common areas, etc.?

Does the Franchisee have Liability Insurance with the City as a named insured?

Are the franchisee and city aware of the documented failure of 50 franchises in this league? If so, what is the response and guarantee that the City and taxpayers are not left “holding the bag” in the event they suffer the same fate? (I would be happy to supply you with the list including contact information - assuming you will contact the facilities of the failed and/or never played franchises. Perhaps they will share with you the experiences they have had with this league. In the unfortunate event you continue to move this plan forward, they may have surplus supplies and equipment available at a deeply discounted rate?)

Now that the New Mexico Runners have begun play at the Rio Rancho Community Center, have you, councilors or any city staff been in contact with your peers to ask about their specific experiences? Perhaps they can address some of these questions? What are the actual numbers and their experiences with this league?

When comparing the GCCC with the Rio Rancho Community Center, please keep in mind that the majority of ice sports activity in ABQ occurs on the two sheets (plus two side sheets for practice and curling) at The Outpost Arena, making the situation very different when it comes to available times and competition for ice time during the prime season. The McDermott Athletic Center is the only other ice I am aware of in ABQ, they may also have valuable insights. Santa Fe does not have the luxury of alternative ice sheets or times, particularly during prime season.

As a longtime skater and very average hockey player, I have been a member of USA Hockey as both a participant and as a youth coach for many years. I have played and coached in at least 50 arenas as a result. Much to my surprise when we visited and moved here, the Chavez Community Center Ice Arena is a topnotch facility. You and the Councilors should be aware of, and proud of, what you and we have as a community.

Sadly, my impression after leaving the meeting is that I doubt you and the council have a complete understanding of how outstanding the Ice Arena facility, staff and community are as they serve Santa Fe and our surrounding area. I also do not think you comprehend what an asset they are for not only for the City of Santa Fe, but for Santa Fe County and all of Northern New Mexico.

The association scheduler pointed out what has been a long standing schedule for this community for many years - also affecting other area organizations. The illusion that it will "only be" 6 out of 52 weekends is absurd, when in fact it is 6 out of 14 prime weekends. I did not see any reaction or commitment to look into these effects on local or outlying programs from you or the councilors.

The question was asked if you or council members have ever skated at the arena. I only saw one Councilor nod in the affirmative. The question was also asked if you or council members have ever spent any significant time over a weekend to observe the programs and activities underway – especially this time of year. The time that you propose to disrupt.

Perhaps you should plan to do so?

We wonder, as members of the GCCC, have you taken into consideration how our weekend use of the facility will be affected by this?

One more thought. It appears that your reported responses and outlook are in direct conflict with comments and expectations of the franchisee. As more and more contradictions come to light, it makes me wonder.....

Michael Cardinal  
Santa Fe