

# **ARENA ADVISORY MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday May 18, 2022

5:30 PM

## **Roll Call**

Present: Chairman Nick Wallner; Gerry Blanchette; Mike Gfroerer; Councilor Zandra Rice-Hawkins; Jeff Cain; Councilor Gail Matson; Chris Brown General Services Director Chip Chesley; Public Properties Superintendent Jay Burgess; Arena & Properties Manager Jeff Bardwell

Absent: Joe Farrelly; Dan Arndt

Guests: Concord Youth Hockey Treasurer Wes Riley; Deodonne Bhattarai

Meeting called to order at 5:35 PM

## **Public Skate Policy**

Since the last committee meeting we received some constituent feedback on the Public Skate Policy. While the new policy is much more inclusive there is concern that it could still discriminate. Zandra Rice-Hawkins proposed an edited version of the policy. Discussion on the edited policy included being vetted by the city solicitor and staff training. Gail Matson made a motion to approve the edited policy subject to the city solicitor's review, motion was seconded by Gerry Blanchette, there was no further discussion, motion passed unanimously.

## **Junior Team Proposal**

Jeff Bardwell updated the committee on the NAHL Junior Team proposal. In October of 2021 Chris Brown approached the City of Concord to bring a five-team program to the arena and build an addition with locker rooms, training rooms, coaches office, etc. to house the program on the east end of the building. In December of 2021 General Services staff developed a report to summarize the impact the program would have on the Arena. Arena Advisory discussed the report in January of 2022, Chris Brown met with city administration in February 2022 to discuss the report. At the end of that meeting it appeared that the parties were far apart and the City Manager asked Chris Brown to reach back out if there are any changes on his end that would be worth further discussion.

Chris Brown reached out to the Arena Manager and met with him and the Public Properties Superintendent in March 2022. A two-team proposal was discussed along with moving the NAHL addition from the east end of the building and incorporating it into the existing proposed addition on the northwest corner of the arena. A phase 1 build of the arena addition, approximately 3,800 SF, would include a new lobby (1,200 SF) and NAHL locker rooms and coaches room space (2,600 SF). The NAHL would base two Teams at the Everett Arena. Anticipated to start in the fall of 2023. The NAHL program would purchase game ice at the regular rate and practice ice at a discounted rate. The Arena would maintain ice for an additional two months, with Ice-Out in mid to late May annually. The NAHL would partner with the City to build an approximately a 3,800 SF addition on the north side of the building.

Arena Advisory Committee met in April and discussed how this arrangement would impact the existing addition plan. The full first floor build out of the existing plan would not be possible unless the new locker room space was vacated by the NAHL program. Also, this would be a significant program change if the NAHL proposal moves forward. Extending the ice season through mid-May would eliminate 10 spring shows. The ice time from mid-March through mid-May would initially start with only the NAHL program and public sessions. There may be other rental opportunities but we would be starting from scratch and spring ice is the most difficult ice to sell.

Revenue received from the NAHL program and subtracting the existing arena revenue that would be displaced would equal \$37,710. Also, there would be an additional \$20,000 in operating costs extending the season two months so the approximate net to the City would be \$17,710.

The Arena Manager and Public Properties Superintendent had a Zoom meeting May 11<sup>th</sup> with the NAHL Commissioner and Chris Brown and discussed challenges a new program face, attendance at games, game times and other facility needs.

Challenges at other venues discussed with the Commissioner included a new program moving too fast, not having a good working relationship with the facility or other user groups. Attendance at other facilities ranged from 400 on up depending on the location. Game times on Friday or Saturday usually start at 7:00 pm or 7:30 pm with warmups and ice make starting one-half hour earlier. The current schedule at the arena a team would take the ice at 7:30 pm for warm ups. An 8:00 pm puck drop would need to be discussed and approved by the league. If the game must start at 7:30 pm this would be an additional impact on Concord Youth Hockey Association.

Other facility needs include a training room, storage, laundry facilities, etc. in addition to the locker rooms and coach's office. A review would be needed to see how or if this would fit into a 3,800 square foot area that includes a new lobby space.

Chris Brown updated the committee on his proposal. The NAHL is one team with 26 players, the other four teams are needed to support the program financially. It was never the intent to displace any current customers at the Arena. Ideally it would be best to have all teams at one location for logistical reasons. The league looks at Concord as an ideal location. The success of the program is not determined by attendance at games, estimated attendance is 300 - 500. There may be opportunities for the program to help with other arena projects.

Gerry Blanchette commented that public/private partnerships can be successful and there needs to be good space planning as there may be certain programming elements the city wants to include. Nick Wallner asked if Chris Brown had received the report that was developed in January, Chris Brown indicated that he had reviewed the report.

Discussion took place on a two-team scenario, a summary sheet was distributed showing new revenue, displaced revenue and existing customer impact. The summary sheet does not include the additional operational cost of approximately \$20,000 for extending the ice season for two months.

Discussion took place on upgrades such as new bleachers that would be beneficial to the City and Arena. Zandra Rice-Hawkins asked what the timeline was for this proposal. Chris Brown indicated the plan is to purchase the team in the spring of 2022, announce and recruit in September of 2022 with the program beginning in September of 2023. Mike Gfroerer asked if the plan included adding a second sheet of ice, Chris Brown indicated no just the one sheet.

Discussion took place on impact to existing customers and how the Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) may affect the project.

Jeff Cain inquired if it was a one team or two team proposal. Chris Brown indicated it would be mostly one team with the second team playing a few games at the arena and the rest at tournaments at other facilities.

Nick Wallner asked how many hours impact this would be on Concord Youth Hockey Association (CYHA). Wes Riley commented it appeared to be approximately 100 hours. Also, that CYHA has typically had to purchase ice outside the Arena in non-COVID years. This coming season it would be a larger impact as game time slots have increased. Discussion took place on the number of teams this would impact, it appears it would impact two full season teams.

Zandra Rice-Hawkins asked if there would be any local players on the NAHL team, Chris Brown indicated it was unlikely. Jeff Cain commented that the concept is a good idea but is concerned about the program impact. Nick Wallner commented that he is concerned about the impact the spring shows.

Gerry Blanchette asked Chris Brown what are the next steps. Chris Brown commented he would need to know if the City wants to participate in the proposal. Zandra Rice-Hawkins asked if the proposal does not work out at the Everett Arena would it happen at another facility. Chris Brown indicated that it would not happen at another facility.

Zandra Rice-Hawkins made a motion not to move forward with this proposal at this time. Mike Gfroerer seconded. Discussion took place on the current city finances and the impact to existing customers. All committee members feel that the Junior Proposal is a good idea but not now under the current circumstances.

A roll call vote was taken on the motion: Nick Wallner yes; Gerry Blanchette no; Gail Matson yes; Jeff Cain yes; Mike Gfroerer yes; Chris Brown abstained; Zandra Rice-Hawkins yes. Motion passed 5 to 1 and 1 abstention.

Nick Wallner made a motion to adjourn, Gail Matson seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned 7:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey R. Bardwell  
Arena & Properties Manager