



April 6, 2011

Dear Junior Council,

Introduction

Recently Ken Gaber, President of Minnesota Junior Hockey, resigned from his position for personal reasons. As the leagues previous First VP, I am now the president. Ken will continue to provide leadership and wisdom gleaned from 30 years of junior hockey experience including twelve years as the MNJHL President.

Purpose of this letter

The Directors of the MNJHL desire to keep Junior Council fully abreast of the recent activities in our league and of another Tier III A Junior Hockey League, the NA3HL, that is positioning itself to encroach upon our USA Hockey footprint. We desire open, timely communication with the leadership of Junior Council to ensure that you are aware of the potential negative affect that these recent actions of the NA3HL could have on our league and to the American Development Model in Minnesota.

Background

Several months ago Mark Frankenfeld visited with Ken Gaber and leadership from one of our teams; this led to a league-wide presentation that six of our eight teams attended and I personally attended. Mr Frankenfeld stated several times that if a MNJHL nonprofit organization would choose to align with the NA3HL for-profit league, the existing team's value would increase to \$135K. He stated that there were many people "lined up with money" with a desire to obtain an existing MNJHL team and market at that cost. This might sound like a savvy business deal to a team if an expansion MNJHL affiliate membership is valued at \$35K. He also eluded to promises of moving players up from the NA3HL to Tier II.

Our Concerns

1) Intention to recruit current high school athletes away from their programs
Mr. Frankenfeld explained that he knew "Minnesota was a hockey haven" and that part of the attraction for the NA3HL owners is the opportunity to be in closer proximity to the deep talent pool of Minnesota high school players from which to fill their rosters. Several members shared concerns about the shift to actively recruiting Minnesota high school players which is contrary to what we believe is good for the Minnesota's youth hockey. We explained that the MNJHL has had an unblemished relationship with the Minnesota State High School League and has

been building strong relationships with the individual high school coaches because as a league, we have formally committed that our affiliate member teams would not fill their rosters with current high school players. We have also worked together to create before-after roster positions that complement the high school season for a finite number of Minnesota high school players. We have honored this commitment for more than a decade and the MNJHL has every intention of continuing to provide opportunities for high school graduates and before-after players rather than recruiting student-athletes away from their community programs to play junior hockey.

2) Elimination of some MNJHL teams

His presentation included the vision for the NA3HL was to include six teams in the state of Minnesota and that they were not interested in more than that number. Several members were not interested in the merging of our leagues or in our league coming under the control of the NA3HL because that would immediately eliminate several existing MNJHL teams as determined by their leadership. This would cause committed hockey programs to lose the value of their affiliate membership (minimum of \$35K each) AND they would lose the opportunity to exist if they were no longer in a USA Hockey sanctioned Junior league. Undoubtedly this would cause a legal issue for the league and USA Hockey.

3) Vision to proceed with or without the MNJHL as a whole, splitting our league

When asked what plans were if we did not move our league under the domain of the NA3HL, he repeated multiple times that the NA3HL would place six teams in the state of Minnesota, with or without our league, with or without any of our individual teams joining their efforts. This could potentially divide allegiance if some of the teams would join the NA3HL while still operating in their existing market. He assured us that they had already secured additional cities, the funding, the staffing to start six new teams in Minnesota for next season and that if the MNJHL chose to ignore this opportunity that the NA3HL would go on without us as they pursue aligning all junior teams in the Midwest under the NA3HL brand.

Next Steps

During the last two MNJHL league meetings, we have fielded many questions and have had lengthy discussions about this option presented by Mr. Frankenfeld.

According to the MNJHL's Policies and Procedures, affiliate members are to make a declaration of intent to play for the subsequent season and provide a \$2000 deposit by April 1st. Without this step, the MNJHL team loses its affiliate membership for the following season. Three of the existing eight MNJHL teams (Granite City Lumberjacks, Minnesota Wildcats, Little Falls Flying Aces) did not submit this paperwork nor their deposit. Accordingly, their affiliate memberships are now the property of the MNJHL to be operated by the league or transferred to a duly qualified organization to operate a team in our league. These three organizations did not verbally share their intentions to join the NA3HL or to stop operating, nor have they provided any formal written statement to league

leadership whatsoever; rather they all have gone silent but we have heard rumors that they intend to join the NA3HL.

The MNJHL has five healthy organizations that have met the requirements of the MNJHL policies and procedures: Rochester Ice Hawks, Hudson Crusaders, Twin Cities Northern Lights, Minnesota Owls, Edina Lakers. Over the past few months we have been in dialogue with several groups that were interested in a transfer of an affiliate membership (formerly Spooner WI) as well as potential expansion if USA Hockey would approve. We are pleased with the quality of leadership and the proposals we are hearing. We fully intend to have a league of eight teams in the fall of 2011 even without the three teams that did not fulfill their obligations to retain their legal right to operate in the MNJHL. Should Junior Council wish to have further information about these deliberations as we proceed, we would be pleased to provide details about our due diligence. We are committed to recruiting viable, sustainable organizations that will be longterm partners not just the source for expansion funds.

During the Tier III Junior A National Tournament in Rochester last weekend I was encouraged by leaders from other leagues at this level have committed to stand in support and solidarity with the MNJHL. We have also met with leadership from Minnesota Hockey and from the Minnesota State High School League to gain their perspective.

All of the above mentioned leaders were concerned about the encroaching of NA3HL into the state of Minnesota and the very negative consequences this could create for all of our respective interests, but predominantly the student-athletes in our state.

Since 1993, the MNJHL leaders have worked hard to align our values with those of Minnesota youth hockey and the high school league. We are committed to continuing to work with these entities and to offering a quality program to graduating seniors for preparing them for DIII college.

We respectfully ask for the Junior Council and USA Hockey to do the following:

1) Stand behind the MNJHL which has committed to work within the development framework of Minnesota Hockey and ensure our continued success. We have been a strong partner with a proven track record of peacefully co-existing with youth and Minnesota high school hockey. We have also publicly committed to offering complementary level of hockey rather than competition as we prepare players for D3 hockey. We have always acknowledged the strong talent pool in Minnesota but have chosen to protect the student-athletes' best interest by not enticing them to play junior hockey until they have graduated. Other models may work in other states but we wish to align with a very successful model in our state that the NA3HL could seriously undermine.

2) In the state of Minnesota, prohibit other leagues' Tier III junior hockey teams from operating (including additional Canadian junior leagues). We have proven to be a solid partner in the USA Hockey family and continue to develop players for the next level and ask that you ensure that our affiliate members are not competing with other teams that have been given full sanction of USAH to operate within our footprint. We have respectfully not stepped into the CSHL territory and seek an injunction from allowing others from operating in our state. We are the Minnesota Junior Hockey League and ask that you help us remain financially viable and programmatically secure by not permitting others to come and compete in our home. Four of our remaining five teams have successfully operated here since 1993 which is testament to our sustainability and commitment.

3) Prohibit the NA3HL from expanding by adding three former MNJHL teams (Lumberjacks, Flying Aces, Wildcats) unless these teams operate outside of the state of Minnesota.

4) Freeze the rosters and prevent the movement of the players listed on the final roster of the three former MNJHL teams; after the MNJHL has a dispersal draft, only allow movement to the NA3HL by trade from the MNJHL team.

5) Prevent these dispersed players from being on a NA3HL roster for the 2011-2012 season (unless duly traded). Otherwise the NA could hold players and then feed their teams to avoid the dispersal draft.

6) Issue a public statement reflecting your position on items #1-5 so we can publish your decisions on our website as soon as possible. Teams in both leagues are actively recruiting and holding tryouts in the coming weeks. We need to protect the positive image of USAH's junior programs. Doing this will protect the best interest of the players and families by helping them understand USAH's position prior to trying out for teams that may/may not exist.

The above actions would ensure that the rich history of junior hockey in our state will remain in balance with the existing USAH programs.

Respectfully,

Ralph Hayne
President
Minnesota Junior Hockey League