

**Sartell Youth Hockey Association  
Special Meeting  
Wednesday, June 26th, 2017**

**Call to Order** – President Dena Walters called the meeting to order at 8:03 pm.

**SYHA Board Members in attendance** – President Dena Walkers, Vice President Aaron Kahre, Treasurer Bill McCabe, Secretary Henry Wieland, Amanda Pinket, Travis Peterlin and Jeremy Henkemeyer.

**Other Members in attendance** –Chad Ritter, John Erickson, Jill Dalager Brunner, Pam Brookings and Robbie Schultz.

**Agenda** – the following was unanimously approved (with the exception of Michael Whitlock who was absent):

1. On a motion by Bill McCabe and seconded by Travis Peterlin the Sartell Youth Hockey association and Sartell Youth Rec. Center Association agreed to extend for another 6 months and to each pay half of the \$6,500/month cost of hiring Jill Dalager Brunner with Blue Print Fundraising to study and raise the funds for Sartell Youth Recreation Center (SYRC) to build an outdoor ice rink.
2. On a motion by Bill McCabe and seconded by Dena Walters the Sartell Youth Hockey association approved the moving of \$10,000 from the gambling account to the SYHA account.



# Sartell Youth Recreation Center

## Feasibility Study, Executive Summary

January 4, 2017



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Blueprint Fundraising conducted a feasibility study for Sartell Youth Recreation Center (SYRC) in preparation for their potential capital campaign. It is their vision to build an outdoor ice rink, with roof and bleachers, and upgrade current facilities, including 6 new locker rooms and a coach's room, at Bernick's Arena in Sartell, Minnesota. This project is being proposed to meet the growing needs of local hockey players, parents, fans and the community. The arena, located in Pinecone Regional Park, opened in 2003 and has hosted over 2,000 hockey games, as well as other athletic competitions and trainings, and has held concerts, wedding and craft shows.

The feasibility study consisted of personal interviews with 30 local leaders, stakeholders and hockey supporters, as well as analysis of arena operations and media coverage. Participants answered questions and shared opinions about the Case for Support. The following findings and recommendations are based on this work.

### Findings

- A majority of interview participants said SYRC's strengths are its dedicated and passionate staff, board, and volunteers and its well-maintained, safe, and warm arena.
- Weaknesses include inadequate ice time to accommodate all teams, winter-only ice, a mediocre sponsorship program, and confusion and concern about the level of financial support from the City of Sartell and Sartell - St Stephen School District.
- The board of directors and task force were viewed as knowledgeable and professional hockey parents and past hockey parents, impassioned to serve the players and their families. However, those leadership groups were seen as lacking representation from large, local companies and needing greater connection to wealthy leaders and the non-hockey community to achieve their goals. The groups also lacked banking/finance expertise and gender diversity.
- SYRC's vision/purpose was viewed as a high community priority by 63% of participants, 27% rated it medium priority and 10% said it was low priority.
- 67% of interviewees cited Sartell Youth Hockey as a critical partner, and high school hockey (Sartell and Storm'n Sabres) (37%) and City of Sartell (30%) as important partners.
- The campaign Case for Support was met with positive response: 60% said they accepted it, 27% had too many questions to form an opinion and 13% were unable to support it.
- Reasons to support campaign: Invest in the youth, health/wellness/social benefits of participating in hockey, more ice time to reach 3:1 practice to game ratio and increase skills/competitive rank of Sartell hockey teams, keep Sartell a premium community, and economic benefits of drawing out of town guests.
- Questions about campaign project: What is the cost/benefit analysis of building an outdoor versus indoor sheet of ice? What is the demand for outside ice and what is the satisfaction rate of outdoor ice in other communities? How will ice time be scheduled between indoor and outdoor facilities? How will this covered facility fulfill community needs during the off-season? What is the backup plan if fundraising goal isn't reached?
- Campaign concerns: Are there enough individuals and businesses that will financially support this sports and recreation facility? What other projects are competing for potential donors' interest and funds? How can we clearly communicate to a wider non-hockey audience the benefits of this project and overcome mis-information and stereotypes? Will the cost of hockey increase for participants?
- Asked if they supported an increase in fees for more ice time: 53% said yes and 10% said no, remaining participants didn't comment strongly for or against a rise in fees.

- The priority of the capital campaign in the community was seen as positive: 60% said high, 30% said medium and 10% said it was a low community priority
- 53% said the \$3.8M capital campaign goal is attainable, 37% were unsure and 3% said no
- Asked if they would personally support the project: 73% said they would advocate for it, 60% said they would volunteer, and 70% said they would donate

#### Recommendations

The feasibility study results reinforced that Sartel hockey supporters are dedicated, passionate and eager to have additional ice for practice, games and tournaments. A majority of study participants found the fundraising goal feasible, the timeline practical and stated they would personally advocate, volunteer and donate to the project.

Blueprint Fundraising recommends moving forward with the proposed capital campaign as described in the Case for Support. However, the following suggestions should be carefully considered before proceeding.

- Clear communication is advised to satisfy questions and concerns about project cost, design, and outdoor ice practicality.
- Professionalizing arena sponsorship and advertising is urgently recommended to strengthen relationships with business partners and demonstrate the ability to secure funding.
- Greater transparency of board actions and governance will increase trust as this high-stakes project gets underway.
- Setting funding priorities, having a Plan B or a phased approach, will also enhance public trust and demonstrate thoughtful resource allocation.
- Recruitment of additional volunteers, particularly high profile, persuasive leaders, is necessary to successfully secure funding from individuals, businesses and corporations.
- Consideration should be given to program and funding partners to determine if shared goals exist and how those communalities could enhance fundraising.
- Several internal and external influences heighten the sense of urgency and swift campaign implementation is recommended.

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