

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) JANUARY 15, 2002

VAUGHAN KINGS "AAA" HOCKEY ASSOCIATION- SPECIAL STATUS

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Community Services, in consultation with the Director of Recreation and Culture and the Administrative Manager, respectfully request direction regarding "special status" for the Vaughan Kings "AAA" Hockey Association.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with various ice- time allocation options related to the request made by the Vaughan Kings "AAA" Hockey Association for special status.

Background - Analysis and Options

At the Committee of the Whole meeting of November 12, 2001, Council requested a staff report outlining the options to better accommodate the ice time requirements of the Vaughan Kings "AAA" Hockey Association. The Vaughan Kings "AAA" Hockey Association (Kings) came forward to request they be given "special status" in order to compete for ice time with the those clubs currently receiving their ice allocation under the Community Service Organization category such as the CVHA, the Vaughan Panthers, the Woodbridge and Thornhill Skating Clubs, and the Vaughan Girls Hockey Association.

As per the Council-approved Policy for Facility Allocations, seasonal ice permits are allocated according to the following priority schedule:

Priority 1: Community Service Organizations (CSO) - Children and Youth

Definition: Recognized CSO's offering non-profit programs for children and youth up to the age of 18. Vaughan residents must form at least 90% of the membership. Groups in this category are subject to the CSO rental rates (subsidized).

Priority 2: Community Service Organizations – Adults

Definition: Recognized CSO's offering non-profit programs for adults. Vaughan residents must form at least 75% of the membership. Groups in this category are subject to the CSO rental rates for meetings only. All other uses are subject to the Vaughan Resident rental rates.

Priority 3: Vaughan Residents

Definition: Private individuals residing in Vaughan interested in reserving an arena for private functions and/or groups operating a semi-private professional sport organizations. Individuals in this category are subject to the Vaughan Resident rental rates.

Please note Priorities 4 and 5 (Vaughan Commercial and Non-Vaughan) are in effect if any ice time is available.

CSO's submit their ice time requests early in the new year. In the Spring the Department of Recreation of Culture allocates time for the following ice season. Prime time hours are the first choice for all organizations, thus the allocation process can be fairly complex and may involve collaboration and cooperation amongst all recognized organizations. In order to best accommodate the number of hours requested a portion of prime time and less desirable hours are allocated to all groups.

In the minor hockey system, there are two levels, “rep” and house-league. “Rep” players are selected through a try-out process while the house-league level is open to all regardless of ability. “Rep” try-outs (including Select, “A”, “AA” and “AAA” levels) are in April of each year and teams are established as a result. Participants in “house-league” hockey (for CVHA approximately 80%) and figure skating programs register from April through to mid September.

Following registration, groups analyze participant numbers and are permitted to return to the City the previously allocated ice time that they will not require. September 30th of each year is the current deadline for returning ice. In the 2001/2002 season returned hours ranged from 2 to 35 depending on the extent of the original allocation. The majority of the returned hours are considered less desirable. The list of returned hours is then shared amongst all organizations and advertised for sale on all of the outside community centre signs. Approximately 20% of the hours are re-sold and the less desirable hours remain unused.

The Kings are a unique, non-profit hockey organization offering “AAA” level of play in the Greater Toronto Hockey League (GTHL). Their current membership is 125 players with approximately 42% Vaughan residents. Therefore, in terms of the allocations priority schedule, the Kings are currently classified as a Priority 3. Their goal is to increase their Vaughan-based participant numbers and to consolidate their ice time at one arena, preferably in Vaughan. Further, the executive are of the opinion that as parents are scouting “AAA” teams, the quality of the facility is important. The Kings are also concerned that they are losing players because there is no “home” ice.

At a meeting between staff and representatives of the Kings, the association expressed two key points. Firstly, they require 12 hours per week for games and additional hours for practice time if possible. Secondly, they expressed concern with the September 30th date for ice returns. The Kings are recommending the date be amended to April 30th to coincide with their try-out schedule and, if required, the need to secure additional facilities. The Kings recognize that they do not satisfy the residency requirement for CSO status and the related subsidized rental rates. However, they are seeking “special status” in order to receive an ice allocation at the same time as the CSO minor sports organizations albeit at a higher rental rate.

Recognizing the significant impact on the ice allocations to the CVHA, staff also met with members of the CVHA’s executive. They expressed concerns re their potential for growth as a result of a reduced ice allocation. The current membership is over 3000 players with over 90% Vaughan residents. Although they currently offer “rep” hockey up to “AA” level, their vision for the future includes the establishment of a “AAA” hockey level. In addition, recognizing that the City of Vaughan cannot support two “AAA” organizations, they are of the opinion that their future “rep” development would be in jeopardy should the Kings be given special status.

After closely considering all of the input, staff have developed two options and the associated implications for Council’s deliberations.

Option 1

The City of Vaughan grants “special status” to the Vaughan Kings “AAA” Hockey Association thereby allowing them to be considered for facility allocations at the same time as those clubs currently receiving allocations under the Community Service Organization category.

Implications

- 1) Special status will allow the Kings to provide a level of play not currently available in Vaughan. In addition ice allocations occurs in the Spring thereby giving the Kings an opportunity to promote a viable program as try-outs occur in April. Further, Vaughan residents would benefit from the exposure, the convenience and the economic impact (patronage of local businesses) of having a AAA team.

- 2) The granting of "special status" may set a precedent. Other sport organizations (soccer, baseball) may request of Council similar consideration thereby jeopardizing the most integral aspect of the Community Service Organization structure, that being the order of allocation priorities.
- 3) The success of "rep" hockey is directly related to the scheduling of their games. Therefore, the more convenient the game times the greater the number of spectators. Consequently, if 12 prime time hours are allocated to the Kings, there could be an impact on the other minor ice users.

Option 2

The City of Vaughan not grant "special status" to the Kings and that the ice allocation process be amended (the ice turn-back time) from September 30th to April 30th thereby allowing the Kings to receive an ice allocation in April immediately following the CSO allocations.

Implications

- 1) The integrity of the CSO policy is maintained, including the order of priority allocations.
- 2) The amendment to the ice return date from September 30th to April 30th will require the CSO's to base their ice requirements on their projected participant numbers rather than actual registrations. The most significant impact will be felt by the CVHA House league level and the Figure Skating Clubs. Recognizing that they will be required to make ice time commitments six months earlier than past practice, the result may be more extensive waiting lists.
- 3) The Kings benefit through early confirmation of ice time, recognizing that not all of the hours may be suitable, thus enabling them to secure additional ice if required.
- 4) There is more of an opportunity for the Department to generate additional permit revenue by re-selling the ice time that is returned.

Conclusion

As per Council's request, staff have provided options related to the allocation of ice time for the Vaughan Kings "AAA" Hockey Association. Current practices have been reviewed, the organizations have been consulted and, in the opinion of staff, both options are workable.

Attachments

N/A

Report prepared by:

Joyce Epstein, Director of Recreation and Culture and Mary Reali , Administrative Manager.

Respectfully submitted,

G. Doris Haas,
Commissioner of Community Services.