

Amalgamation Town Hall Notes

Tuesday, January 10, 2023

7:03PM – Welcome from Barb

Welcome, thanks for attending, overview of the night, introduction of committee (we are volunteers with an interest in DMH)

7:05PM Slide Show presentation *(these notes were comments in addition to what was on the slide)*

Background – This came from a conversation between Minto, Drayton, Mount Forest and Arthur. The goal is to provide an opportunity for all children to play at an appropriate skill level. We represent all children, rep and LL. With these discussions we are hoping to demonstrate how it could be an opportunity for all children to play at their skill level.

Objective tonight is that no one leaves without a question answered. There are some pre-submitted questions, opportunity for open forum. Factual opportunity from members and executives.

Where?

- Drayton, Palmerston, Harriston (Clifford ice is not utilized this season so it has not been part of our discussions, nor do we expect it to be).
- Opportunity for a better balance of ice time, spreading out the opportunity of when we have ice. Mon-Thurs. With an amalgamation there is more flexibility for prime-time ice and maybe move fewer weekend practices.

Why?

- With more teams at all age groups, players have more opportunity to play at their skill level
 - eg. With our current U15 group we have lost half the skaters in 4 years (for different reasons). As children age they drop off and it is harder to balance teams at all division. With Minto we could have a combined 35 U15 skaters which would allow for more flexible teams and allow us to match skill levels and help keep players playing longer.
- Primary intent of minor hockey is to keep them in sports as long as they want to play and we need them to play at their level to try and do this.

When?

- If process is approved, the intent is that it happens for the 2023/2024 season.
- Mount Forest minor hockey called a meeting with WOAA with MF, Arthur, Minto and Drayton. WOAA said we aren't amalgamating all 4 centres. Conversations after this happened with Minto and Drayton.
- Did our due diligence in finding about amalgamation and what it would require, what it could mean. The Board had to decide if it was information to take to the membership to move it forward for a vote. Which leads us to tonight.
- Minto Town Hall on Thursday, January 12th.

How?

- Votes based upon current constitution – family. You as a family have a vote on amalgamation. This is based upon the constitution, which was approved at the last general meeting in 2022.
- Will be a secret ballot, yes I support/no I do not support. If 2/3 of the votes (67%) are in favour it goes to the next stage which is going to the WOAA who has to approve and then take it to the OMHA. If either centre has less than 2/3 of the votes for support the process stops and the discussion rests for the season.
- Active members within our membership are those skating actively in DMH (NRP don't get a vote)

FAQS:

Right of choice

- This is the ability to choose a new centre within a specific boundary. The new centre point is HWY 9 and Wellington Rd 109 (the round about in Teviotdale). All ROC players will be grandfathered in or they can apply for a new right of choice. Right of choice is your closest hockey centre. ROC does not apply to those within the town centres, it is the “country kids”
 - Eg. If you live in Glen Allan, you play in Drayton based on ROC (your home centre based on distance is actually closer to Woolwich).

WOAA

- The WOAA is under the OMHA umbrella, there are other hockey groups in Ontario. All those different associations carry AA/AA/A – if players within our organization choose to play at a higher level they go to another centre. Currently if a Drayton player wants to play AAA they first try out in Waterloo, if Minto you try out in Huron Perth. The proposed endorsed group is Waterloo for all.

Next Steps: Voting will take place at the arena, vote once as a family. There will be a master list from our registration centre. Minto is voting the same nights as us and voting results will be distributed after to the membership. Barb (President) and Ed (secretary) are counting the votes with a few other board members present.

7:20 PM Pre-Submitted Questions (if you don't see your exact question, some were multiples)

***I didn't type the full questions out, question numbers are based on the order on the slides*

Q 1 Can NPR players vote?

- No, NPR players can't vote as per the constitution.

Q 2- What teams would we play?

- If we merge with Minto we would likely be classified as a B centre. This classification is determined by registration numbers and team registration that are submitted to the board and the league.
- With 2 teams, you have one rep and one LL team based on numbers if we have 2 Minto and 2 Drayton we now have 4 teams. Now you make a rep team, a tier team and LL teams.
- Palmerston and Drayton will be used mainly for games, Harriston for practices. The initiation program (U9 and below) would be played out of Drayton and Palmerston.

Q 3 – Tryouts would still be in September if anyone wants to be released to try out that would still go through as Waterloo does their tryouts in the spring.

Q 4 – Will it be done by try outs? It needs to be approved by membership, WOAA and OMHA but players will still be able to try out.

Q 5 – Girls programs? The Committee have talked about this in length, it would be great and come down to registration numbers. We can't make commitment, has to be registered for.

Q 6 – Families with children at multiple age levels? There is really no way to say that you are going to get around this, it happens already we just all practice in Drayton.

Q 7 – More ice time impact registration fee? We don't know. Fees go up every year (refs, ice etc). the proposal is that it stays the same for 23/24. Things that would impact registration rates are things the organization can't control.

Q 8 – Fergus and Woolwich aren't in WOAA so we can't consider merging with them.

Q 9 – Can IP programs run out of their individual towns? This was a suggestion, but things get awkward if not approached as one organization. It would be great in theory, but Minto needs support with IP. We looked at the whole thing or nothing at all. *Couldn't they be amalgamated and only register for Drayton or Minto?* Keep it close get game play against each other and as you move forward in U11/U13 then they will already know each other and be more of a unified group.

Q 10 – Harriston ice questions. Minto mostly uses Palmerston for their games, they use Harriston for their practices, we would echo that and use Drayton and Palmerston for games. Minto does also use Palmerton for practices. If we have a team looking for ice, there is an additional option to go to Harriston. Cost to the team but there is an option.

Q 11 – how will coaches be picked? The same as now.

Q 12 – Enhanced hockey experience? The idea is to get kids playing with their same skill level and keep them in hockey longer. We will be playing the same teams, it won't change a lot of who we play, but it might change where you are going now. We already have Drayton vs Drayton now, amalgamated maybe we have 4 teams. LL teams would still be more outside the centre. At the initiation program with more kids, could play closer against each other and arrange more games closer to home.

Q 13 – will coaches expectations be elevated? No, it won't change, there will be more coaches and more talent for coaches to coaches, they will have the same expectations as they do now.

Q 14 – enhanced experience, coaches? Tryouts will take place in September still, this aligns with picking coaches when we do (July) and follows the same plan as we currently do.

Q 15 – is this the experience our players not parents? Yes – we want kids to play within their own skill level.

Q 16 – Is there less invasive merge options (eg. Just merging rep)? This was looked at, but decided it's all or nothing.

Q 17 – fixed number of players? No, this will depend on registration numbers, coaches and coaches aid help determine that. Same as our current plans.

Q 18 – voting speed, why not target 2024? This opportunity presented itself and we are in the proper timeline of amalgamation for next season. In terms of coaching selection, it is often a coaching begging there are not a ton of candidates lined up. We did adjust our process this year, moving the selection earlier (July) to give head coaches the opportunity to get their program ready.

7:44PM Open Forum Begins

Why can't we leave the WOAA?

- The WOAA constitution doesn't allow associations to leave, they have to go through and appeal to the OMHA. Arthur left the WOAA and joined Tri-County and now they want back in to WOAA.
- Technically we could appeal to leave the WOAA but then we have to be prepared to travel more. When we looked at it, it made most sense to look at Minto. If players want to leave, they can go play there.
- The question is where do our members want to be? The goal is to keep members closer to home. What's in it for the bigger centre? Brantford, Hamilton, Burlington they travel much further.

Can you merge all 4 of us together (Arthur, Minto, Drayton, Mount Forest)?

- There was a meeting at the start of this process. All 4 groups were together and WOAA shut it down. If we all the centres left the WOAA, technically it's a possibility we would have to make it happen. This is not an option right now. Our current option on the table is Drayton and Minto.

Did we have conversations about just merging with Arthur? Half of their teams are struggling, we already have some of their players, it would be just 2 arenas vs the northern driving?

- We sat down at a board level and looked at options. We decided to continue with Minto instead of Arthur. Arthur is not currently part of the WOAA – if something is proposed, it would be dependent on them being approved back into WOAA.
- Underlining factor is also our high school kids go together.
- There was a bit of a push for Mount Forest and Arthur to explore options that way, they are also in the same township. The fit is better for us with Minto.

What the driving force for this? In U15 and under doesn't Drayton have an excellent program with healthy player numbers? We are already playing B centres so what is it?

- We have always had a strong initiation program, but what we find is as you go through into the older groups it is more of a challenge. Numbers are still good in U11; U13 is sharing a goalie; U15 only has 1 team; U18 only has one team.
- If you don't want to play rep you can't play LL unless you have 2 teams.
- In the last 5 years, the U11 numbers have always been really good, with interest in a select program (Tier 1 rep, Tier 2 rep and LL) -- merging with Minto would allow us to play these levels.
- U11 Rep is the only team that is in this Drayton that plays in the top B loop and this is because they are exceptional. Normally a D centre can't go into the top loop unless there is a pretty good reason.
- The players currently in their first year of U18 this year had 3 teams 6 years ago

Would there be an opportunity with the amalgamation to have a the B Centre Rep program so that it wouldn't be a flat program. Currently, there is really no distinction between our teams with the exception coaching and resources. Would these rep teams get extra ice time, ramp up development etc.

- There hasn't been talk about this at this time. Tabled for discussion.

What would our ice times look like?

- We haven't gotten to the ice time stage, where they are, age groups etc as there are many factors that will impact age groups. We will aim to be fair going through the scheduling process, so not all practices will be in Harriston.

What are Minto's challenges on why their numbers are dropping.

- There are many factors. The socio-economic status is not the same as in Drayton. Palmerston has more students but in 2-3 years they won't have kids in the program. They also start ice-time at 5:00pm. Both our communities together will make every year stronger.

How many will players will you lose by amalgamating?

- You might lose a few by amalgamating – older and younger, it will impact both the numbers. We can't say how many we will lose. In speaking with other centres who amalgamated BHS and Sea Forth, West Grey/Hanover, Flesherton/Dundaulk, they didn't lose a lot of kids. They lost some, gained some.

Has there been research done with the township regarding population growth?

- Research been done with local governments with projections from our area - they want population growth.

What are the specifics of the ROC?

- You have to be within an 8KM difference from one centres centre point to your home address. If you are 10 KM to Drayton and 18 to Arthur you have a right of choice.

Do centres overlap?

- When amalgamations take place, you can't move the centre point to gain players from other centres. You must stay within your area. If you live in a designated centre you have no ROC, if you live in town boundaries you have to play in the centre.

WOAA Statistic

- 50 years ago there were 45 centres in WOAA and now we are down to 22 (not including amalgamations currently happening).

What is the driving force for it? Palmerston/Harriston amalgamated and they dropped in numbers. You are driving people out of hockey, eventually there won't be hockey in Drayton.

- There isn't a driving force, there is an opportunity from the conversation of amalgamation. Minto approached us. We think it's a good opportunity. We want our kids to play hockey, we don't want to force them to drive somewhere else.
- Centres are amalgamating, if Minto amalgamates with Mount Forest – where do we go? Our next option might be Listowel etc. In 3+ years?
- We want kids to be able to stay in hockey longer, in U15/U18 it is not good, U13 team shares a goalie, if we lose that goalie – where do the kids play?

How many do teams does Minto have?

- 1 U18, 2 U15, 2 U13. Together we could provide more opportunities for our kids to keep playing by creating 2+ teams.

What is the new colour?

- This is not picked.

What are the enrollment numbers?

- 208 enrolled in Drayton Minor Hockey
- If enrollment is going up, the towns getting bigger – there is 0 ice time available. The U11 Rep team snagged a 4pm ice time for practice.

Is there a chance that Mount Forest merges with us in the future too?

- WOAA only allows B centres and lower, WOAA is not supportive of the 3 centres merging. 500 participants mark would make you have to go to an A centres. WOAA is not in a position to accommodate programming for A centres. Never say never though – this could happen.

Why can't we just share players without amalgamating?

- OMHA residency rules apply – so they don't allow blending of teams, one of the teams would have to fold and go play at another centre, but if the player lives closer to another centre they go to that centre. This has been a struggle since 2010.
 - For example, if you live in Drayton you go to Arthur. You don't have a right of choice to pick playing in Minto.

Can we not amalgamate all the age groups, just the older ones?

- Asked and answered above.

Member comment:

- It will benefit older age teams but relying on younger age group parents to vote in.

Why have we not answered will Woolwich take us?

- A lot of the initiation program members already don't want to drive 10 minutes down the road, we need to keep it closer.
- We would need to go to WOAA and get special approval to be able to have conversations with them.
- A lot of amalgamations are out there, but this is option that the board is bringing to membership, doesn't mean others can't be considered.

Can we have a trial/probation period?

- We could have a probation period for 2 years. The option presented now is that it is all in with no probation period. If we invest two years to try this and then decide we aren't going to do this, it's a lot of effort and work to go back.
- *****TO ASK PALMERSTON BEFORE VOTE*** Is there a way to go back to Minto, families want to know if we can have the option to do this as a trial.**

If Drayton folded what happens?

- Everyone would get a re-right of choice.

Is there a chance of considering keeping initiation program in their local arena again?

- The proposal is that we go all in

Has Minto ever mentioned Clifford arena?

- It was not part of the conversations, Minto township no longer supports that arena. Chances are very low that it would ever come back on the table.

Would our registration rates change?

- Proposal is that our rates won't change. How does that work, our rates are one arena, theirs are two?
 - It's all based on ice time not number of arenas.
- Minto Minor Hockey has a higher fee, plus \$150 fundraising, will we have this?
 - Fees are a bit different between Minto and Drayton in all age groups, keep them similar, but we are planning to use Drayton's as the starting standard.

Why are we not a C centre?

- Every three years there is supposed to be a centre review, due to covid, this hasn't happened.
- The numbers predict that Drayton should be bumped to a C centre. At end of day, the designation is only used for tournaments.

Point of interest – 1973 amalgamated with Minto it worked.

How do we communicate with people who aren't here tonight?

- Important that able to communicate with people that are not here. Important that we provide information to the families in the lower age groups. An email will come from Barb with additional information and posted on the website amalgamation page.

Voting clarification:

- Clarity 2/3 of the votes cast not 2/3 of the membership.

Why did it take so long for membership to find out if the board has known for months?

- The board and committee did what they thought was right, maybe could have been more transparent. Wanted to have more information about it before it was brought forward.

Will the Rep program be developed, strengthened and have more ice time?

- It's never a conversation that happened, so don't really know.
- Is this not a question we should answered before we make the vote.

Worried about Minto's low initiation program numbers.

- Adding to them won't necessarily solve the issue in 10 years. We are maxed in Drayton, we need more ice time.

If amalgamate in Minto and can pick up ice time in Harriston, why don't we just pick-up extra ice time now?

- With amalgamation we become part of a centre we get reduced costs which makes a significant difference in the cost of ice time.

****TO ASK PALMERSTON PRE VOTE ******If we are going to create equal non-tiered teams, can we have U7 Drayton and U7 Palmerston teams and let them stay in their centre if possible? Minto's initiation program is not that strong, yes this could happen provided that the numbers support it. Palmerston and Drayton are equipped with the boards for the half ice. **This group needs to know that this is an option, something we need to confirm with Palmerston before the vote, if the numbers support it, IP would keep kids in their own town at the non-tiered IP level.**

Might be helpful to hold a specific IP night. (membership comment 95 percent of concerned parents are here, but those that aren't need to be informed)

Palmerston has town hall this week, then two committees will meet, and determine next communications.