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CDRC board reverses decision to bring OJSL games to Shelburne

Written By PAULA BROWN

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Ontario Junior Super League (OJSL) will not be making its way to Shelburne, as a majority of the Dufferin County Recreation Centre Board of Management votes ?no? to have the local arena act as the league's hub.

?It's with great remorse, that I say that we, the CDRC board, thank you, but refuse the offer to contract the time required for the Super League to use the facility through the 2020-2021 timeframe,? said board member Laura Ryan. ?Due to the COVID-19 restrictions at this time.?

The CDRC Board of Management held a public special meeting via Zoom last Thursday (Nov. 12), after concerns surrounding exposure to COVID-19 and hosting the OJSL were brought up by the community. The meeting, which was attended by CDRC board members, community residents, stakeholders and OJSL President Dwayne McKillop, looked to further discuss whether Shelburne's arena would act as a hub for the league's 2020/21 season.

At the meeting Dwayne McKillop, President of the OJSL, spoke to the board addressing the concerns of COVID-19 exposure that have been brought up by the community, as well as why the league was looking at Shelburne as their host for the season.

The OSJL, a tier II Junior A league, consists of nine teams with players primarily from the Halton region and a few players coming in from the GTA, McKillop said. Due to volume of other leagues in the Halton region McKillop said they haven't been able to get ?hub ice? to create the environment of safety they want in the league.

?We don't want to play in multiple arenas, we want to play in one arena and we want to be able to assure the safety of the kids,? said McKillop.

Shelburne Minor Hockey, one of the current user groups of the CDRC arena, spoke to some of the concerns their registrants have had, noting that the local league is restricted to its own public health unit.

?They're looking at it as though the CDRC is our community centre and it's providing the ability to obviously have hockey and figure skating, and there's a certain level of comfort in the fact that we're not sharing that facility,? said the rep from Shelburne Minor Hockey.

The OJSL first met with the CDRC at the end of October to discuss having the local arena act as a hub for the league's season and had already given a rental payment prior to the board's decision to decline.

Concerns about the league holding its season at the local arena began to rise with the increasing numbers of the COVID-19 cases and the knowledge that players in the league would be travelling from zones designated ?Red?, ?Yellow?, and ?Orange?.

In the lead up to their vote many of the Board members cited COVID-19 concerns and a responsibility to the community for their reason for declining.

Dufferin County Warden Darren White, who also sits on the board, addressed the other members before the vote was given.

?I can tell you if this board is not really willing to give this plan, serious reconsideration than other higher levels of government may well take that decision on your hands,? said White.

Following the meeting and the board's decision to vote ?no,? CDRC Board of Management Chair, Chris Gerrits spoke to the Free Press about the board's initial pursuit of allowing the league.

?At the time we thought that what he was saying sounded good, which is why we directed staff to gather more information and start the process, but that being said, a lot of things have changed in two weeks,? said Gerrits.

The Free Press made several attempts to contact McKillop to comment on where the league will go next, but did not receive a response.