

Stamford Youth Hockey Association

November 12, 2014 Membership Meeting

Board Members Present: John Nilsen, Rex Morris, Lee Bowbeer, Kevin Unger & Brian Mitchell

Members Present: Approximately 30

Other: Pizza was provided

Meeting called to order at 8:25

President: John provided a brief overview as the season is underway and going well. It was discussed that special guest speakers will be on the calendar a few times a year in order to provide additional information on topics such as High School Hockey, Concussions and USA Hockey topics to name a few. He set up the discussion for Westhill High School Hockey Coach John Santagata. (See below)

Operations: Lee informed us that he will be sheading what little ice we have left (that we do not need) on a weekly basis.

Registrar: Kevin informed us that the Developmental League (House) jerseys had arrived and were distributed.

Development: Brian informed the members that all team photo days had been published to the master as well as team calendars. Also, Becky Gerace volunteered to address the SYHA board at Terry Conners to provide more information and market the program more effectively. In addition, she connected SYHA with Lisa Surmaczewicz at TCR to assist with marketing our program through her contacts in the Stamford Public Schools. We will work with her to get information out prior to the December break to drive up Tiger Shark membership for our January session.

Swedish Exchange: Rex informed us that fundraising continues and is going well. Discount cards had been procured with over 10 local business providing discounts and offers until August 30, 2015. Card price is \$20. In addition, a raffle has been

setup to be drawn in January giving away at least 10 great prizes (details to follow). Finally, the group has set up a donation site (<http://www.gofundme.com/syhaSwedishXchange>) for those who find it easier to donate with a credit card.

Hockey Update: Bobby and Rosario provided details on our on-going clinics which continue to be a success. In addition Mark Rosetti gave an update on the Developmental (House) league which began playing games this month. We have 4 U8 and 2 U12 teams made up of 75 players. Finally Greg provided an update that we have 31 Tiger Sharks in the current session. John said he would like to see that go to 60 for our session that begins in January which got a good chuckle from Greg.

Stacy Ellis introduced the idea of a Middle School league. She shared how Trinity was starting such a team and that perhaps it would be another way to attract players for High School hockey if they could play in some capacity for their Middle School. The membership rallied around this and the board agreed to look into what options might be available.

Guest Speaker/Topic: Westhill High School Coach, John Santagata discussing the current state of High School Hockey.

Coach John Santagata has spent the last 17 years (7 as Head and 10 as Assistant Coach) at Westhill High School (WHS) in Stamford. For this upcoming season Coach Santagata said WHS has 21 players which is more than he has had in previous years. He has not had to make cuts in several years as the numbers are just not what they once were. Trinity and Stamford High are currently struggling to put teams together as their numbers are very low and the immediate future does not look great.

Coach Santagata also mentioned how there was talk of creating a hockey co-op for the 2014/2015 season however in the end that did not happen. He said at this point it would probably make the most sense until we get the numbers up.

So where are they going? Many are going to AAA and Junior Programs and paying as much as \$10,000 a year to chase the dream. Coach Santagata said that

perhaps 10 players over the last 20 years that he knows have gone on to a higher level of hockey out of 1,000's. For many, High School hockey should be an achievable goal and a lot of fun as you play for your school according to Coach.

What should you expect playing High School Hockey? According to Coach, practice and or games at least 6 days a week including one or two early morning skates. In addition, although there is not an official cost to playing High School hockey, you will need to either fund-raise or donate to offset the cost of additional ice. At WHS this is done through the Blueline club (run by parents to provide funding for the team). Each local area High School team has a similar club to help support those efforts.

Finally, unfortunately Coach Santagata still gets many kids who have not mastered the art of skating. Many can't stop on both sides and/or struggle to skate backwards or do cross-overs. As a result, he has to spend more time on the basics then he would like to, eating away valuable practice time.

Coach Santagata said he was happy to hear about our focus on skating and the USA Hockey ADM model to get our kids focused on skills and skating. He was also impressed with our Coaches and Hockey Directors and said we are on the right path. Finally, compared to other Fairfield county programs we are a great deal and with our coaching, we really need to market ourselves better.

Coach we hear you loud and clear!

Meeting adjourned at 10:15pm

Respectfully submitted,

John A. Nilsen

President - SYHA