

Remodeled arena will be showplace for North Iowa

Summary

The North Iowa Recreational Arena is undergoing a remodeling project. It's good timing for thriving skating programs and the arrival of a new hockey team.

It has served North Iowa well. Now, it's deserving of a facelift.

The North Iowa Recreational Arena will get just that under an ambitious \$580,000 expansion and remodeling plan being undertaken by the Mason City Youth Hockey Association.

This is a landmark project in a landmark year for those who promote and take part in ice skating in North Iowa.

The North Iowa Outlaws, the newest member of the fast-paced North American Hockey League for young players with ambitions of earning college scholarships and perhaps professional careers, will begin play this fall, with 27 home games on 12 weekends.

The Mason City Mohawk hockey club, a perennial power in the Iowa High School Hockey League, will have 17 home games in the coming season.

Then there are the many youth teams, figure skaters and those who use the arena for recreational skating.

The facility gets a lot of use from the fall through the spring. In the warm-weather months, the arena is used for horse shows virtually every weekend.

Thus, the remodeling project is welcomed. It includes new public restrooms, new skate rental and concession areas, office space for the arena manager and an office for the Outlaws along with a new entrance.

Once those projects are completed, existing space will be remodeled.

New dasher boards (those along the ice) and glass will be installed in September, before the ice goes in.

Hockey officials hope the entire project can be completed in January.

This is a project that seems overdue and deserves community support.

Long recognized as having a good ice sheet, the arena itself can use updating. The locker room situation especially needs addressing, not only because of the arrival of the Outlaws but for youth tournaments that bring a lot of people and business to the area. Now, there will be five new locker rooms with showers, and the arena will be much more attractive and functional overall.

Cerro Gordo County supervisors and the Mason City Council have backed the project with \$5,000 donations. That will help the hockey board in its quest for a \$105,100 state Community Attraction and Tourism grant.

There are so many positive aspects about this project.

It will benefit youth (always a key consideration when it comes to appropriating money) and will be a major attraction for skaters, horse groups, and those who use the building for trade shows and other purposes.

Supervisor Jay Urdahl expressed his appreciation for the improvement project when he suggested the county give it \$5,000.

"We certainly appreciate the work you have done and the improvements you're going to make in the arena," he told youth hockey officials.

We echo that praise, and hope and trust the community will support the project and the opportunities the improved facility will afford.

P.S. There is talk of providing horse enthusiasts their own facilities, allowing the ice to remain in use year-around. That is another project that's long overdue; we hope it's on the fast track.

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