

**Soo Michigan Hockey Association
Monday February 26, 2024 @ 5:30 pm
Big Bear Hospitality Room**

1. Meeting called to order at 5:30 pm president, Joe Esson
2. **Roll Call – Present:** Cheyenne Holappa, Heather Klever, Joe Esson, Renee Labadie, Tim Labadie, Matt Parker, Dennis Eby, Shaun Schummer, Dennis Eby
Motion made by Heather, seconded by Renee. Motion approved.

Damon Whitten emailed the board about his absence tonight and Diane Maleport told Heather in person last week of her absence tonight.
3. **Approval of agenda:** Shaun added “Try Hockey for Free” under HIP/U6/U8 and Joe added Bantam A instead of AA and Midget A or JV team for 2024-25 season, both under “New Business.”
Motion made by Matt, seconded by Renee. Motion approved.
4. **Approval of meeting minutes from January 29, 2024, and February 15, 2024:**
Motion made by Matt, seconded by Shaun. Motion approved.
5. **Director Reports**
 - a. **President** – Joe mentioned that he would like to see that the travel coach having the decision of scheduling their tryout dates. Renee did suggest that a time frame for coaches to have to have a date set.
It was discussed that the travel coaches be selected in April, with a deadline of May 10, 2024, to have dates scheduled for tryouts by the coaches and they will have until June 7, 2024 to have tryouts done by. *That above information needs to be added to the travel coaching application. Effectively immediately.
Also, this needs to be posted on social media.
The coach could also have a second tryout in August if needed.
Motion made by Matt, seconded by Heather. Motion approved.
Travel coaching applications will be available February 27, 2024, and due back to the Coaching Director, Damon Whitten and President, Joe Esson by March 15, 2024.
No late applications excepted.
This information needs to be put on social media as well.
Motion made by Matt, seconded by Dennis. Motion approved.
 - b. **Vice President** – Renee mentioned she would be getting a copy of a key to the coaches’ room/equipment room and trophy case. She must get with Tammy Graham and let her know that it’s in the bylaws that the secretary is to have a set of keys.
There is paperwork that will need to be filled out.
ADDENDUM: After the meeting, I sent an email to Renee and Joe and told them I do not wish to have a copy of the above-mentioned keys.
Renee questioned the trophies going into the trophy case, how they should be displayed, what trophies need to go out, etc.
Matt suggested having a subcommittee for the trophies and trophy case.
Motion made by Matt, seconded by Dennis. Motion approved.

- c. **Treasurer** – Cheyenne asked Renee if she has received an equipment bill from LSSU. As of this time Renee has not received anything, she will reach out to Ryan and request an invoice.

Cheyenne also asked if Matt, Tim and Dennis could email her a list of goalies that played for the respective divisions this season, so she could submit 50% reimbursement of their registration fee for the 2023-24 season.

- d. **Secretary** – Heather mentioned that she has only been contacted by HIP/U6/U8 and the Peewee team of dates/times and locations of their banquets. She also mentioned to coaches/managers in the audience that the board will pay \$15.00 for players and up to four rosters coaches and one manager towards their banquet meal.
- e. **Coaching Director** – Damon was absent. He did submit an email with his comments (see below).

I did what to share strong support for having travel tryouts moved to April along with trying to have coaches in place prior to those tryouts. I believe this will aid us in retaining players in SMHA. It will also help us in identifying coaches for both travel and house earlier, which again, helps us to retain players and be organized as an association.

I would like to work with the board and Dennis to announce tryout dates for travel as soon as possible. Then work to find coaches for the travel teams while also building a small committee to help with input on tryouts and team selection to improve support for coaches and transparency for the youth hockey community.

Additionally, it sounds like we need to discuss the possibility of an A team with the U 14 group. I'm concerned we could lose a lot of players if that is not an option for that age group from what I am hearing.

- f. **Travel Director** – Dennis was in full support of having a Midget A or JV and a Bantam A team for the 2024-25 season. He feels that if all kids have an opportunity to play, that is what is important.

Dennis asked Renee what the status was of the NIHL banner. According to Renee, she did make multiple phone calls and being their games weren't up to date in Game Sheets, NIHL was not able to see the stats. That was a requirement for NIHL.

Dennis also mentioned that every two years the travel teams are to get new jerseys. Dennis would like to get them ordered as soon as possible and not wait around for this to be done. Joe suggested that this topic be tabled until next month's meeting and at that time Renee can call and get prices on jerseys and will be able to provide them to the board next month.

- g. **Tournament Director** – vacant. We did have two people submit their letters of interest in the position at tonight's meeting.

Cheyenne also inquired if Cabin Fever was closed out to MAHA? Joe said that he spoke with Chris, and it had not closed out.

- h. **Bantam/Midget Director** – Parker wanted the board and audience members to know that he fully supports having a Bantam A and Midget A or JV team. He wants to make sure all players have somewhere they can play.

- i. **Squirt/Peewee Director** – Tim also wanted the board and audience to know that he fully supports having a Bantam A team for the upcoming hockey season.

Tim also wanted to let Cheyenne know that he will need additional ice until March 13 as his Squirt team has advanced to the Adray State Tournament in Grand Rapids. Cheyenne has additional ice for the Squirt & Bantam B teams.

- j. **HIP/Mite Director** - Shaun suggests the board highly consider participating in USA Hockey “Try Hockey for Free” day. He thought we could have LSSA Lakers, Soo Eagle, AAA Indian, and Soo High hockey players come out and skate with the kids. There are 2 dates that are designated for “Try Hockey for Free” scheduled in February and November, where you can get free products. However, Shaun thinks that having it in November is too late in the season. He and Matt came up with a day of Saturday September 8, 2024, to have that be SMHA “Try Hockey for Free” day. Shaun would like to see if there is money available from the Bill Lynn donation or Kaines fund that could be put towards purchasing jerseys for the kids.

Shaun reiterated from last month’s meeting that the board needs to meet alone with board members only to discuss things that don’t need to be aired in front of the board. There are too many off topic conversations going on, people talking out of turn and the members of the audience don’t need to sit and listen to all of that. We have an agenda, and we should stick to that.

Shaun also commented that the board shouldn’t be making decisions when it comes to the entire association. For example, it was up to the board at the beginning of the season to determine whether there was going to be a Peewee A team. The board voted against it, and we lost members from our association to Canada. Shaun feels that we need to let the members be heard and be part of that decision.

Heather commented that we post on Facebook or send out an email to upcoming Bantam parents with the recent discussion of having a Bantam A team for the 2024-25 season. All parents can voice their opinions, comments, or concerns via email to the appropriate people on the board. Parents can submit an email to Coaching Director, Damon Whitten at dwhitten@lssu.edu, and cc. their emails to President, Joe Esson at hawkcoachjoe@hotmail.com & Travel Director, Dennis Eby at fairviewconstr@live.com. Any comments, questions, concerns or issues that are being emailed to the above-mentioned board members need to be no later than March 4, 2024 to be taken into consideration for the Bantam A team. *No public comments on Facebook regarding this topic, they must be emailed to Damon Whitten, Joe Esson and Dennis Eby.

- k. **Ice Scheduler** - Cheyenne mentioned that last week and this week’s ice on February 21 & 28, 2024 was cancelled by the Big Bear due to Soo High Hockey games being held. She reached out to coaches whose practices were affected by the cancellation of practice. Alan Swanson & Joe Esson have both rescheduled to other locations and Tim Labadie & Jason Payment declined rescheduling elsewhere.

As mentioned above under Squirt/Peewee Director, Cheyenne has extended ice for Squirt & Bantam B teams.

- l. **Registrar** – Absent
6. **Old Business** –
- a. **Trophy Case** – Discussed in minutes mentioned above.

7. New Business –

a. Having a Bantam A instead of a Bantam AA team for the 2024-25 season.

It was discussed in the minutes mentioned above. The board will put it out on social media for input of upcoming Bantam parents.

b. Having a Midget A or JV team for the 2024-25 season.

The difference between a Midget A team will only consist of freshman and sophomore age players. A JV team will consist of freshman, sophomore, junior and seniors. Not only will the association have one of the above-mentioned Midget teams, but in addition a Midget BB team.

Dennis made the motion to go forward with having a Midget A or Midget JV team depending on how the numbers look, seconded by Matt. Motion approved.

Public Comment:

Eric McKechnie mentioned that he felt that the association would lose more kids to Canada if there was a Bantam AA program next season.

Will Odbert had to say that he was here tonight as a concerned parent for next season's Bantam travel team. Other parents here and I are asking the board to consider an A bantam travel team next season.

Four years ago, when our boys were first year squirts, we had 3 second year kids, and the rest of the team were first year. We had an ok season but playing majority second year AA teams were challenging and the boys couldn't compete well. The following year the team consisted of all second-year kids and two first year. Our Squirt AA team went on to win districts. Then the board at the time decided for some odd reason to remove Mike Metrish as head coach. That was two years ago.

Last year our boys again had to play AA hockey because we had 2 second year players, and the rest were first year. While we won some games again, we were unable to compete. Now this year our boys, all second year except for two first year players were able to compete quite well. They finished the season with top 15 ranking, 20-0 winning the NIHL league which hasn't been won by a peewee team since 2019.

As you can see the boys do well against their age group. So, we could be setting up our kids for a state run as a travel team! Correct me if I'm wrong there.

Our concern is having a team of first year kids next year, where most of them will be 12 or barely 13, skating and hitting against AA teams that consist of 14-year-olds in full swing testosterone! History tells us they haven't been very competitive in this situation. Our concern is the fact they will be hitting with kids older, more mature, and who have been seasoned for the next level of play. Our kids would benefit in skill growth and safety playing as an A travel team next year. So again, I say we are requesting the board consider an A travel team next season for bantam.

Andrei Sawruk wanted to know if the term A or AA could just be eliminated and the coach be chosen as a "travel coach" and determine who he/she will choose for their team, they could also make that decision as to whether it the team will be an A or AA?

Erkki Pulkkinen fully supports having a Bantam A team next season. He also commented that more Canadians would come to play for our association if they were able to.

Darian Micomonaco supports having a Bantam A team next season. He commented that parents want certainty.

Keri Streeter totally understands what the second-year Peewee parents are saying who are wanting a Bantam A team next season. Her concern was how many second-year kids this would affect because they would not be given a chance to play on that team as it's only for first year players.

Jeff Killips wanted to know why the last two weeks all hockey was played at the Big Bear when there is the Pullar and LSSU to choose from? The Midget team had a Showdown this past weekend and the locker rooms were all messed up. He just feels that if other locations were available to play hockey, you wouldn't have so much chaos at one facility.

Joe Calcaterra fully supports having a Bantam A team and he would like to know when parents will know when that decision will be made.

Bob Marchand supports the Bantam A team. He also commented that when the board is talking, one person should talk. There are too many side conversations taking place. Also, when the audience has the floor to talk for their 3 minutes, it should be left up to them to talk and not be interrupted by everyone.

Sheena Adams commented that she came into tonight's meeting with a letter of interest for the Tournament Director position, but after five minutes of watching how our board conducts a meeting, she wanted nothing to do with it.

Carrie Stacy supports the Bantam A team. She also thinks it's a great idea to have parent involvement and not just a decision based on what the board thinks.

Shaun Schummer had one last comment before we adjourned our meeting. After he heard what Sheena Adams had to say, he said that was why it was important to stick to the agenda and not be arguing over stuff.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:36 pm. Next meeting scheduled for Monday March 18, 2024 @ 5:30 pm at the Big Bear.

Minutes taken, typed, and submitted by:



Heather Klever, SMHA Secretary