



PHA SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

MEETING DATE: January 27, 2025 @ 6pm

LOCATION: Google Meets

Board Members in attendance: Tamara Currah, Amber Anderson, Nick Brannon, Kara Holland, Matt Hansen, Jason Zakotnik, Tyler Hofer

Other in attendance: Dave Pawlowski, Ellen Ramsey, Tayte Racich, Allysa Booth, Andy Currah, Katie White, Rusti Christensen, Lauryn Hansen, Colt Nelson, Tiffany Lindley, Chris & Sara Gregory, Jon Ernster, Aaron Seehafer, Shanda Jensen, Todd Lamppa, Farrah Rhea, Julie E. *(while best efforts were made to record attendees, there may be some that are not recorded)*

President Currah called the meeting to order at 7:01pm. She welcomed everyone in attendance and thanked them for joining in on the meeting.

New Business

1. Juniors League Proposal

[Chris & Sara Gregory - Juniors Team Proposition Letter](#)

President Currah introduced Chris & Sara Gregory. The Gregory's are the current owners of the Bakersfield Roughnecks and are considering moving the team to Pinedale. The Gregory's provided an overview of their team and proposal.

- The league is a tier 3 AAA Juniors, tuition based league. Players are between the ages of 16-21 and live with host (billet) families during the season.
- The season generally starts mid/late August with formal practices and games running September-March. Typically the team practices 3-4 days a week in the mornings (~1.5 hours) so as not to interfere with other end user group times. They anticipate utilizing around 200 hours of ice time for practices.
- A total of 21 home games are scheduled each season. Games are held Fri-Sat-Sun each scheduled weekend. Typical game start times are 7:30pm on Fri & Sat and noon on Sun although this is not a set requirement.
- High expectations are set for the athletes (training rules, curfew) and all players are expected to provide community service during the season. Chris shared various examples of what this may look like from being present and encouraging with the youth hockey league to reading in the schools or volunteering at the local food bank. Some athletes take online courses during the season and some seek part-time employment.

- The league would bring their own 3-4 person staff that would be present in Pinedale for the duration of the season. Additional game day assistant opportunities would exist such as EMTs, trainers, and photography.
- Why Pinedale? In the 3 years the Gregory's have operated the team in Bakersfield, they continue to see costs continue to rise. The owner of the Juniors team in Vernal turned them on to the Pinedale area and they are excited about the small town atmosphere that so many Juniors teams regionally have had success with.

After the Gregory's presentation, the floor was open for board member and public comments or questions.

- Scheduling concerns were a popular point of conversation. The Gregory's indicated that they want to work as much as possible with other users (hockey and figure skating) to complement schedules. They are open to meeting and sharing schedules prior to submitting so the other user groups can provide input. They are also open to avoiding specific dates that may be dedicated to recurring annual events.
 - A typical game day schedule would look as follows (estimated 7:30pm start):
 - 4pm: Gregory's and/or staff arrive and set merchandise table, prepare lockers rooms, etc
 - 5pm: teams arrive
 - 6:30pm: doors open for spectators
 - 7pm: warm-up
 - 7:30pm: puck drop
 - While game day preparation starts well in advance, the Gregory's do not expect the facility to be cleared at that time. The request that the ice be cleared by 6:45pm at the latest to allow for a zam although at least 1-hour before game time is preferred.
 - The team may occasionally pick-up additional ice time (example Friday morning if there is no Friday game) but does not anticipate doing this regularly on weekends or holidays.
- Timeframe of this proposal is ambitious with a goal of being in Pinedale to start next season. This includes building their coaching staff, rebranding the team, and finding billet families.
 - Would likely need 10 local billet families. Their preference is to double players up with families as they have found this often a better experience for the athletes. Billet families are required to provide housing and food. Players provide their own transportation.
- Facility needs and expectations for additional funding to be allocated to the rink were discussed.
 - Ideally the team has their own designated locker room. The Gregorys acknowledged that this is currently a challenge at the Pinedale rink and would need to possibly bring in a temporary locker room.

- As far as need for additional staffing or other resources for the rink, they will pay ice rental fees to accommodate for any of these expenses. They have also had experience with being able to open the rink on their own with no staff member present during practice times.
- All games are broadcasted on Flow Hockey (a requirement of the league). During the Juniors games, the current LiveBarn feed would be blacked out however it would be available at all other times.
- Concerns were expressed about the team seeking local business sponsors. PHA (and several other youth and nonprofit organizations) rely on these sponsorships every year. The Gregorys acknowledged the limit of this in a small community and shared they could potentially maintain some of their sponsors.
- Questions were asked about the teams community involvement, specifically with the hockey association.
 - It is common for the Juniors players to have a presences with the youth teams. This may include being at practices, having the players on the ice for the national anthem, hosting small clinics/lessons (if there is a need in the community).
 - Men's league participation: while not encouraged, the players get to make this choice whether to participate or not.
- Game day attendance. Tickets would likely be ~\$10/person, possible discounted tickets for local youth players. Currently the team draws ~100 spectators. The Gregorys would like to see 200 fans at the games. Attendees shared their concerns with the Gregorys that this may be unrealistic in Pinedale because of 1) the very small population, 2) the local culture rarely pays to attend events, 3) the hockey community in Pinedale is small and often traveling out of town during weekends throughout the season participating in their own games.
- Recruitment for the league is done primarily at spring skills camps and using stat based programs.

After public comment, the Gregorys were thanked for their time. Additional discussion was held outlining the positives, concerns, and additional questions about the proposal.

Positives

- Recruit more kids into community
- Bridge gap of local level to higher level
- Benefit to local economy (hotels, rink, restaurants, etc)
- Community involvement

Concerns

- Schedule impacts (example HS game times not being able to happen at prime times).
 - An idea was presented to share our calendar with the Gregorys to review to help them see the big picture of our PHA season.

- Pulling sponsorship funds from local businesses that would affect other youth programs
- Expense to county based on rink needs especially the locker room question
- Expectations for game attendance not being achievable
- Short term presence of the team

Questions

- Local management: how does this Juniors team fit into the current rink operations and what impact would this have on the other end users? How will these relations and acknowledgements that the Gregorys are proposing be respected for the long-term?

The board will compose a formal letter acknowledging the information presented by the Gregorys and share our positives, concerns, and questions with the Sublette County Commissioners to take into consideration. The Gregorys plan to present to the Commissioners again on Feb 4. PHA's letter must be submitted by Wed, Jan 29 @ 5pm to be included with the meeting agenda.

2. Insurance Renewal

2025 PHA Insurance Policy & Quote

Motion to approve the insurance renewal as presented.

Moved: Kara Holland Second: Nick Brannon

The vote was carried unanimously.

Motion to adjourn at 9:36pm.

Moved: Kara Holland Second: Matt Hansen

Next meeting - Wednesday, February 12 @ 6pm - Pinedale Library Conference Room

Create master hockey schedule

Include 3v3 tourney

Camps etc

PINEDALE



GLACIERS

PO Box 552, Pinedale, WY 82941 | www.pinedaleglaciers.org

January 29, 2025

Dear Sublette County Commissioners,

We are writing on behalf of the Pinedale Hockey Association to address the proposal from the Gregory family regarding their interest in relocating a junior hockey team to Pinedale. Earlier this week, PHA hosted a special board meeting to gather input from our members and allow the Gregorays to share their proposal with the association and answer any questions. The following attempts to present a balanced summary of the potential benefits, concerns, and questions raised during this discussion.

Our association remains committed to the well-being of our members, the growth of hockey, and fostering a strong sense of community. While the proposal offers exciting opportunities, it also presents discussion worthy considerations regarding its potential impact on our local programs, businesses, and broader community.

We respect that the final decision rests with the Gregorays and the Commissioners and appreciate the opportunity for our comments to be heard.

Benefits Identified

- Youth Inspiration and Development:** A junior hockey team could inspire local players by providing role models and a tangible connection to higher levels of competition. This team could act as a bridge between high school and college hockey, offering young athletes a pathway to pursue their goals and further develop their skills. By observing dedicated, disciplined athletes competing at an advanced level, youth players may feel more motivated to commit to the sport and envision a future in higher-level hockey.
- Community Involvement:** The Gregorays emphasized that junior players would engage in local community service, such as assisting with youth hockey practices, reading in schools, and volunteering at organizations such as the food bank. This involvement could create meaningful connections between the junior team and the community.
- Economic Benefits:**
A junior hockey team could provide a significant boost to the local economy by increasing traffic to businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and retail stores. Game days, practices, and visiting teams would bring additional visitors, leading to more overnight stays, dining out, and local spending. Hosting teams may also attract regional visitors, further contributing to the economy while positioning Pinedale as a destination for hockey and tourism.

Additionally, the junior team would bring its own staff and create part-time job opportunities in roles such as game-day assistants, EMTs, trainers, and photographers. These positions could provide new ways for community members to engage with the sport while generating additional economic activity.

4. **High Standards for Players:** Junior athletes are held to strict training rules, curfews, and expectations for community involvement, such as volunteering and mentoring younger players. The presence of junior players embodying these standards could serve as a positive influence on our youth players, encouraging them to adopt similar behaviors both on and off the ice.

Concerns Raised

1. **Scheduling Conflicts:** The statewide hockey program in Wyoming requires careful coordination to schedule a season running from November 1st through the end of February or early March, culminating in state tournaments. During this period, blackout weekends (usually holiday weekends - MLK, Thanksgiving, New Years, President's Day), are reserved for travel team play, ensuring players across the state can participate in events without scheduling conflicts. Our local association also respects these blackout weekends by not scheduling home tournaments during these times, as many of our players participate on travel teams.

Adding a junior team to the rink schedule could complicate this balance, especially if they avoid using blackout weekends as proposed. This would compress the available ice time for practices, games, and tournaments into an already tight schedule. The impact extends beyond our local association, affecting teams that must consider long hours of travel and limited weekend availability when coming to play our teams. PHA will gladly provide our current year's schedule and would like to see it merged with a Junior Team schedule in order to ensure that the Junior Team's schedule could work with the existing PHA schedule.

Tournaments are critical fundraisers for our divisions, and reduced capacity or scheduling conflicts could jeopardize this essential revenue. Such limitations could ultimately increase financial strain on families, who may need to cover additional costs that tournaments traditionally offset.

Additionally, while the Gregorys have expressed a desire to schedule practices during non-peak times, such as mornings, this could place added demands on rink staff. If staffing availability falls short, it could create ripple effects that disrupt practice times or schedules for youth hockey and figure skating programs, further impacting the overall functionality of the rink.

Season Tournaments

For a tournament weekend, at least 10 games are scheduled with a 5-team round robin, with additional games added as more teams participate. We do have divisions that bring 6-9 teams into town for a tournament as well. A typical season hosts the following tournaments:

- WY Pronghorn Travel Team Tournament - October
- PHA Fundraiser 3 vs 3 Tournament - October

- 12U Tournament - November
- 14U Tournament - December
- 10U Tournament - January/February
- 8U/6U Tournament - February/March
- 19U Girls - Anticipated New Tournament 2025-2026 Season
- 18U HS - Possible New Tournament for the 2025-2026 Season

Wyoming Amateur Hockey Association and State Bids

Each team in the WAHL/WAHA are allocated 10 home games and 10 away games. This season, we have three divisions—14U, 19U Girls, and 18U High School—resulting in a total of 30 home games. Looking ahead, we could have the possible return of a fourth division which would increase our home games to 40. If our 10U division also joins, that number could rise to 50. However, final confirmation on the number of divisions will not be known until September, as it depends on registrations and parent preferences.

Additionally, this is a rule change year for WAHA, meaning certain aspects of state bids and WAHL team designations remain uncertain. If rules change, it could impact how we proceed with scheduling and team structures for the upcoming season.

Traditionally, the last two weekends of February, the first two weekends of March have been reserved for potential state tournaments. PHA has submitted bids to host a state tournament multiple times in the past years. These tentative dates are held until we receive confirmation on our bid status, typically around December 19th. This season, our 19U Girls team was awarded the state tournament bid.

2. **Local Sponsorship Competition:** Local businesses already provide crucial support to youth hockey and other community programs. Adding a junior team seeking sponsorships could strain the limited pool of funding available, potentially impacting current programs. While the Gregorys have suggested pursuing larger sponsorships, the possibility exists for local sponsorship requests to inadvertently reduce their ability to contribute to existing youth initiatives.
3. **Facility Needs and Expenses:** The proposal for a dedicated locker room for the junior team for the duration of a season raises concerns about rink capacity and fairness to existing user groups. If an expansion is not planned or temporary locker rooms cannot be implemented, this could significantly impact our youth programs. Ensuring the rink remains focused on supporting local youth ice programs is essential to maintaining fairness and accessibility for all users.
4. **Game Attendance Viability:** The Gregorys have expressed a goal of drawing 200 spectators per game, but concerns were raised about the feasibility of this expectation. With Pinedale's small population and the community's preference for free events, achieving consistent attendance could be challenging. Additionally, many local hockey families travel on weekends for games or tournaments, meaning they are unlikely to be available to attend junior team home games.

If our association cannot schedule home games due to limited ice availability, this will push more of our teams to travel on weekends, further reducing the local audience. The impact of these scheduling conflicts could extend to tournament weekends as well,

where many teams, including our own, are committed to traveling for statewide competitions.

5. **Long-Term Presence:** Concerns were raised about the sustainability of the team's presence in Pinedale and the potential short-term nature of their operations. While the Gregorys have expressed a desire to work collaboratively and support youth hockey, there are concerns about how these commitments will be maintained over time. Experiences from other associations hosting junior teams suggest that relationships are not always upheld as promised. Clear accountability measures are necessary to build trust and ensure the arrangement benefits all stakeholders.

Questions for Thought

1. How will the junior team's schedule be integrated with the existing statewide hockey program to ensure minimal disruption to tournaments, practices, and annual events while maintaining fair access to ice time for all user groups?
2. What measures will ensure the commitments made by the Gregorys to support youth hockey and the community are upheld in the long term?
3. If funding for new locker rooms is not approved, how will the facility needs of the junior team be addressed without negatively impacting existing programs?
4. What steps will be taken to address potential competition for local sponsorships and ensure businesses are not overburdened?

We recognize the potential benefits a junior hockey team could bring to Pinedale and appreciate the Gregorys' enthusiasm for supporting youth hockey and engaging with the community. We encourage the commissioners to carefully consider these factors and welcome further discussion to address any outstanding questions or concerns.

At the end of the day, if a junior team is approved to come to Pinedale, we are committed to working collaboratively to support its integration and ensure a successful season for both parties. Our primary concerns remain of how these key areas—scheduling, ice time, facility needs, sponsorship impacts, and long-term commitments—will be effectively managed in a way that upholds the commitments made and keeps our youth programs at the forefront of rink operations and scheduling. It is crucial that any decisions prioritize the sustainability and success of our existing programs while finding a balanced approach that works for all stakeholders.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Pinedale Hockey Association Board

Tamara Currah (President), Matt Hansen (Vice-President), Jason Zakotnik (Treasurer), Amber Anderson (Secretary), Kara Holland (Registrar), Nick Brannon (Scheduler), Tyler Hofer (Gamesheet)