

HINSDALE CENTRAL HOCKEY CLUB

BOARD MEETING

Willowbrook Ice Arena

September 15, 2025

MINUTES

Attendance

Present: Jay Scharkey, Don Draudt, Julie Rzeppa, Jennifer Tallard, Kelly Staver, Louise Crabb, Garrett Ryan, Bob McPherson, and Coach Brooks.

President's Report

Jay opened the meeting with concerns about the possibility of a shortage of players next season. He explained that discussions have resurfaced regarding the potential need to allow double-rostering with players from other clubs. Jay asked the board whether this was an option the club should reconsider and, if so, how to ensure fairness for players who are fully committed to HCHC. He noted that roster shortages are not unique to HCHC, but rather a challenge faced by many high school programs.

The board discussed possible parameters to guide double-rostering. Ideas included permitting double-rostering only when total player numbers fall below 36, limiting eligibility to one year before requiring a player to commit to a single club, and adjusting season fees for double-rostered players to 50–60 percent of the full cost.

Rick offered to draft a motion that would incorporate these parameters into the club's Policies and Procedures. The proposal will be presented for a future board vote.

Hockey Director's Report

Coach Brooks shared his impressions of the season so far, stating that he is generally pleased with the performance and progress of both teams two weeks into play. However, he noted areas that still need improvement.

He raised concerns about the JV team's limited roster, stressing the importance of support from athletes who are double-rostered between JV and Varsity. Coach Brooks also reported that he has been working with Danny D'Aprile to formalize a schedule for his assistance with the JV team.

Individual player meetings were conducted with JV athletes who had been considered for varsity placement. Coach Brooks felt these conversations went well, but encouraged parents to reach out if they had additional questions.

On the subject of tournaments, Coach Brooks reconfirmed that neither team would participate in the fall tournament scheduled for October 10–13. He asked whether games should be scheduled in its place. The board agreed that it would be more beneficial to give players the weekend off, both to recover and to allow juniors and seniors the opportunity for college visits. Bob McPherson is exploring options for an out-of-town tournament over MLK weekend in January.

Jay and Coach Brooks also reflected on the recent camp-style tryout format, noting the overwhelmingly positive feedback received. This has prompted discussion among several high school clubs about overhauling the Illinois West tryout system. Nora Johnson suggested that James organize a petition with other coaches and hockey directors to bring forward a proposal to the high school committee. Potential changes would extend tryouts across two weeks and incorporate inter-club scrimmages, which coaches believe would encourage stronger competition and effort than intra-squad play.

Finally, Coach Brooks acknowledged some concerns from families about the timing of roster announcements, which were emailed during school hours. Some felt this created unnecessary stress for students. Jay asked the coaching staff to reconsider both the timing and the method for delivering this information.

Social Media & Recruitment

Don provided Rick and Kelly with a list of Bantam players within the HCHS district. Rick, who already has a contact with a Bantam player at the Hawks, expects to identify 10–12 strong prospects. He is currently drafting a “We Want You” letter to distribute to families, highlighting opportunities to connect with HCHC.

Kelly outlined her recruitment efforts, which include inviting 8th-grade students to serve as special guests at games by dropping the first puck or announcing players. She is planning to extend the first invitations for the home opener on Saturday, September 27. In addition, Kelly is working to secure Hinsdale Central students to perform the national anthem at that game.

Treasurer’s Report

Don reported that while fall registrations came in slightly lower than expected, the club’s financial position remains stable thanks to the success of the Vertical Raise fundraiser. He cautioned that last spring’s finances were negatively impacted by reduced registrations and the lack of a Spring Showcase. Moving forward, adjustments to ice may be required if roster sizes decline, and it will be important to ensure the Spring Showcase is held to boost revenue.

Several sponsor contributions are still outstanding, and Rick will be following up to secure those donations.

Events Report

Jennifer announced that she has reserved the back room at Egg Harbor Café in Hinsdale for two all-player brunches, where players will pay individually. The first brunch will take place on the morning of Saturday, September 27, with the second planned for November. Jen also distributed a SignUpGenius for families to help coordinate two individual team lunches, scheduled for October and December.

In addition to the brunch on September 27, the club will host an all-club tailgating event later that day at the rink to celebrate JV and Varsity home games. A food truck is being considered to provide catering.

Plans for Homecoming are finalized. Trailers have been secured, and Louise volunteered her SUV, though she asked that another driver be identified. Volunteers will meet at the HCHS parking lot at 8:30 a.m. to decorate before the parade. Jay will contact the Unell family to see if the club can use their driveway as a parade viewing spot.

Fundraising Report

Rick announced that the Vertical Raise fundraiser generated \$17,670, with \$2,500 in fees paid back to Vertical Raise, leaving the club with approximately \$15,000—meeting the season's fundraising goal.

Rick and Garrett Ryan introduced a new fundraising concept: an event tentatively titled "*An Unforgettable Night with Two NHL Legends + One Great Cause.*" The event would feature two NHL players (who are part of our HCHC Family) sharing their career journeys, moderated by a local news celebrity emcee. Tickets would be sold for admission, with proceeds benefiting both HCHC and a designated charity. The board agreed this event could help raise the club's profile in the larger community, but that it might be beneficial to have more than two NHL Players on the panel.

Secretary's Report

Louise reported on the R&E Committee's review of a varsity incident on September 14th against Lincoln Way involving players Gabe Kraja and Finn Hamman. Both players were assessed a game misconduct and a major for fighting, with Hamman cited as the "third man in." After reviewing video footage, the committee concluded there was insufficient evidence to show that Kraja and Hamman did not engage in fighting. Consistent with the Zero Tolerance Policy, the committee imposed an additional one-game suspension for both players on top of the automatic USA Hockey suspension.

Jay noted that both Lincoln Way and HCHC intend to appeal the suspensions to IL West, with the goal of having both fights “washed out.”

Next Meeting

Monday, October 20, at 6:30 p.m. at Willowbrook Ice Arena.