

DULUTH AMATEUR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION
PLAYER AND COACHES DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

“PROPOSAL FOR CITY-WIDE PLAY AT THE PEE WEE LEVEL”

Premise: The DAHA “Player and Coaches Development Committee”, through repeated and lengthy discussion over the past year, has arrived at a position whereby the committee is making a recommendation to transition Pee Wee level hockey in Duluth to a city-wide basis. The conversation was initiated in the Spring of 2022 within the framework of the “United Duluth Conversation” organized and spearheaded by DAHA President, Eva Pearce. It continued within the agenda of the PCDC as the committee evaluated “levels of play” within the association. The committee raised the question that was a big part of the philosophy to maximize player development for the majority of Duluth skaters. If we are to make a transition to city-wide play at the Pee Wee and Bantam levels, the transition at the Pee Wee level in the next year or two seems logical and appropriate. Starting with the 2023-24 season all Pee Wee level skaters will have played in the Squirt City-Wide model for at least one year. Therefore, the transition for skaters and families should be minimal and hopefully seamless.

Specific Points of Decision-Making:

- In organizing and administering the Pee Wee level of play on a “city-wide” basis, we create an opportunity to more inclusively cover all levels of play at this age group. In the 2022-23 season Denfeld skaters played at the “A and B” levels and East skaters had the opportunity to play at the “AA, B-1, and B level”. This format left gaps in level of play for skaters from both the Denfeld and East Associations. Examples:
 - ❑ Skaters from the Denfeld Association do not have the opportunity to skate at the “AA or B-1” level. It is certainly quite apparent that there were skaters from the Denfeld Association who would have been best served in their individual development by playing at these levels.
 - ❑ It is also apparent that several East Association skates would have been best served in development by playing at the “A” level which only Denfeld provided in 2022-23.
 - ❑ In each case stated above, skaters would be better served in their individual development by being able to play with and against “like level skaters” on a regular basis.
 - ✓ Presently, we are projecting approximately 15-17 Pee Wee skaters in the Denfeld Association. In fielding a team with Denfeld skaters only, Denfeld will be combining skaters that range from AA skaters to C skaters at the Pee Wee level. This situation becomes an injustice to all skaters with regard to placing them at the proper level to maximize their development.
 - ❑ Under a “City-Wide” format, Duluth Hockey would most likely roster teams at all possible levels of play, thus providing the opportunity for the highest percentage of

skaters to play at the level that best suits their present skills, game understanding, and physical and emotional maturity.

- The organization and execution of “player evaluations and team assignments” should be a fairly smooth transition for Duluth Hockey.
- The “City-Wide” model also gives Duluth Hockey a better opportunity to create a more balanced or equal opportunity for game schedules, practice opportunities and related participation fees.
 - ☐ This format also allows for teams of closer “like ability” to practice together and maximize the value of “combined practices”. Examples:
 - ✓ This past season, East AA and B1 teams practice together. There was a fairly sizeable gap between the skill level and experience of the players on the two teams.
 - ✓ If we have a AA team and A team practice together, we are more likely to create a better practice environment than the above example.
 - ✓ With all Pee Wee skaters playing under the same governance (that being DAHA), we should have a better chance of keeping fees consistent across all teams at the level.
- We also should consider the possibility that by offering a greater breadth of opportunity at the Squirt and Pee Wee levels of play it improves Duluth Hockey’s potential to retain families that might consider moving to surrounding associations which might offer an opportunity that better fits their skater.
- With 9 different boards running sub-associations under the DAHA umbrella, it makes common ground and communication difficult, at best. This has also caused a level of “have and have nots” throughout the city where kids’ experiences are controlled by their addresses.

Timing of Decision-Making and Transition:

- The Players and Coaches Development Committee supports the move to “City-Wide” play at the Pee Wee level. The committee also believes that there should be some sense of urgency for the DAHA Board of Directors to either support or oppose the proposal.
- The PCDC is looking to the DAHA Board for a recommendation as to the “vetting process” that should be followed before a final decision on direction is taken.
- It should be noted that the PCDC deems it inherent in the proposal that Duluth Hockey would transition to “City-Wide” play at the Bantam level in the season immediately following a Pee Wee transition.
- The PCDC is sensitive to the “political dynamics” of the decision to move the Pee Wee level of play to a “City-Wide Model”. If the DAHA Board and the PCDC support the proposal and feel like the transition can be made in time to properly execute this transition by the 2023-24 season, it would support this move. However, if the timing seems rushed and not feasible to execute effectively the PCDC would suggest

transition starting with the 2024-25 season. A July 1 deadline for decision on timing of transition.