



## Recreational Hockey Q & A

Over the past several weeks, there has been a great deal of misleading or incorrect information provided centering around the Sportsplex, particularly management decisions involving youth hockey. Additional comments and assumptions have been communicated through meetings, emails, and social media, which have led to more rumors and misinformation.

We would like to address some topics that have come up through a Q & A:

- **Is there going to be youth recreational hockey at the Sportsplex for the 2024-2025 season?**

Absolutely! There will be youth recreational hockey at the Sportsplex. While there will be much in the way of enhanced behind-the-scenes scheduling, players and parents will experience only minor changes to ensure that we can grow recreation hockey and make it better than ever.

- **Is the cost of youth recreational hockey going to increase?**

No! The cost structure that was offered last season through TYHNC/Hillsborough Hogs will be retained so that families will not be burdened with extra expenses.

- **Is the Sportsplex looking to do away with volunteer coaches and parent reps for youth recreational hockey?**

Absolutely not! We understand that volunteers are what brings it to life. We will rely on volunteers to keep the cost of registration down and to maintain the sense of family. We appreciate that The Hogs feel a sense of community and family. We want to preserve that feeling and will continue to discuss ways to accomplish that transition with TYHNC, without losing that sense of community and identity.

- **Will the Sportsplex continue to seek financial aid, scholarships, grants, fundraisers, equipment swaps, and discounts to help keep the cost down for families?**

Absolutely! We will provide recreational hockey league tuition that is already affordable but will also find other ways to help ensure that kids that want to play hockey will have that opportunity even in the face of financial hardship. There are creative ways we have utilized elsewhere to generate effective fundraising efforts using off-season ice. We had asked TYHNC to consider possibilities to partner with us on those initiatives regardless of who administers recreation hockey.

- **Will the leagues be co-ed or separated between boys and girls?**

All youth hockey registrations are co-ed. The rumor that girls would be required to play on an all-girls team is false.

- **Is the Carolina Thunder a privately owned and operated youth hockey program?**

The Carolina Thunder Travel Hockey program is a Sportsplex owned and operated program. It is a travel hockey program with tryouts for the 10U age group and older. The cost is higher; however, it includes more practice ice, games, higher level coaching and instruction

from paid professional coaches, and of course, it includes travel (mostly NC/SC/VA). In fact, if you look at the Carolinas Hockey League schedule, most of the games are against Raleigh based teams thereby minimizing travel and the inherent extra costs.

The Carolina Thunder is not “the Sportsplex version of recreational hockey.” It is another youth hockey option but is intended to be a larger commitment. We will not be expanding the Carolina Thunder program by removing TYHNC or merging the Hillsborough Hogs. Youth recreational hockey will be separate from Carolina Thunder travel hockey. It is a good thing to provide opportunities and options to families.

- **Why would the Sportsplex not want to offer ice time to TYHNC after working with them for almost 30 years?**

Discussions of change had been going on well before the pandemic. The August 2023, a surprise change requiring The Hogs to provide reciprocal game slots for every game played against Polar teams in Raleigh, made the immediate, pressing issue scheduling; specifically, weekend hockey games when all ice rinks are struggling to find time. There were major disruptions to weekend ice users this past season. TYHNC/ Hogs could not present the Sportsplex with a plan for league games. In fact, the Sportsplex has had to manage the procurement of a game schedule for 10+ years through its relationship with the Polar House Hockey League. The Sportsplex, through the ability to schedule its own facility, and through mutually beneficial relationships with other ice rinks, does have a plan for league games. The Sportsplex also has a back-up plan.

Volunteer and parent-led organizations like TYHNC are remarkable. We do not want to lose that identity – in fact, if allowed, we would love to keep the Hillsborough Hogs name/jersey to help with that. However, especially in these times of scarce ice, it takes a lot of manpower to coordinate a schedule, be highly flexible, and all with the knowledge of many ice user groups to think outside the box for solutions. It becomes imperative that long-time experienced professional ice rink and hockey staff administer the key elements of ice management and scheduling.

- **Is Recreation Factory Partners contemplating house league changes for profit related reasons?**

The Sportsplex is a “county enterprise.” An entity separate and distinct from other county government operations. RFP manages the entire complex and the underlying multi-departmental businesses including ice, aquatics, fitness, after/pre-school, field house, summer camps, etc. RFP earns a fixed annual fee for that service regardless of the bottom-line results of the Sportsplex. There is no financial benefit to RFP from a house league change.

When RFP assumed management of the Sportsplex 20 years ago it was losing \$1million per year and draining County tax dollars. Today, through revenue growth that is three times 2005 levels and operational effectiveness, the Sportsplex generates a \$1.5 million surplus that is used to pay for all capital additions, improvements, replacements, etc. No taxpayer dollars are used to fund the Sportsplex. All of the dedicated people at the Sportsplex that you see every day servicing your needs and looking after the building infrastructure are actually RFP employees, many of whom live in Orange County.

- **If the Sportsplex does not administer youth recreational hockey registrations, practice, and game ice scheduling, what are the implications for other users of the ice rink?**

We firmly believe there will be negative consequences. We are seeing increases in youth hockey participation, but that should not take priority over participation growth in figure skating, synchro, public skating, and other levels/age groups of hockey. If the Sportsplex does not administer youth recreational hockey, which will allow the maximization of the ice rink schedule for all, then other renters and users of the ice rink will be negatively impacted. That is not fair and equitable.