

Frontier schools looking into girls hockey

By Karen Robinson
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Updated: November 13, 2009, 8:12 AM /

The Frontier Central School District is the latest suburban district to consider developing a varsity girls ice hockey program.

So far, district officials are being noncommittal.

"We're just gathering information regarding programs we have and the interest we have as we get into the budget," Superintendent Ronald G. DeCarli said. "This is not a knee-jerk thing. We need to look at the feasibility and look at how things stand as we get into the 2010 budget."

No parents or students had publicly appealed to the district or School Board at public meetings before DeCarli mentioned it at last week's board meeting.

DeCarli said that a few parents contacted him about the possibility over the last few months. "It's in a very positive way," he said.

News of interest at Frontier comes a few weeks after a dozen girls and some parents again appealed to the West Seneca School Board to establish a varsity girls ice hockey team there.

Frontier has a boys ice hockey program that has been running for about eight years, using the Hamburg Nike Base ice arena, but it has never had a girls ice hockey program.

"It's a matter of what's happening in Western New York," DeCarli said, noting the efforts of a regional Girls Ice Hockey Development Committee that has been studying the issue for the next school year.

DeCarli said cost is not the primary issue being examined.

"We're not focusing on the cost factor as the first thing. What we're looking at is the interest level," he said. "Our first look is always to see if there's legitimate interest to form a formidable team."

He added, "The more opportunities we have for young people, the better. But you cannot make a decision off the cuff."

Board member Jack D. Chiappone said the basic premise sounded good. "Anything to keep kids off the street is good, and it keeps them out of trouble," he said later.

A committee of athletic directors in the area has recommended starting a girls varsity ice hockey league in 2010-11. The Williamsville School District and the Monsignor Martin Athletic Association, representing Catholic schools in the area, have agreed to field teams. Other local schools are considering it, and Nichols School already has a girls team.

Frontier board Vice President Stanley Figiel noted how difficult it will be to secure ice time at the Nike Base for a new program. Figiel said he could not support a new hockey program if it meant holding practices or games at 5 a. m. or holding games as late as 10 p. m. "How will that child be able to absorb knowledge [through the school day]?" he said.

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