

Girls, parents press West Seneca School Board for hockey team

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Updated: October 20, 2009, 8:40 AM /

About a dozen girls and some parents appealed Monday night to the West Seneca School Board to tell them whether the district plans to support a varsity girls ice hockey team.

They said they had appeared before the board a year ago to make their case for a district-sponsored team. Many were clearly frustrated by what they said was a lack of an answer.

"We've been waiting a long time now," said Hailey Glynn, a sophomore, who said she tried out for the boys team but was cut. "We only have four years of high school. I really want to play hockey."

West Seneca launched a varsity boys ice hockey team at each of the high schools last year. The girls complained Monday that, even if they make the boys team, expecting girls to play with boys is unrealistic. While girls ice hockey forbids checking, boys hockey does not, making it a much different game, the girls said.

Sydney Glynn, said she made the boys team but didn't like playing with them.

"They were really mean," said Sydney, who plays goalie. "They didn't want me on the team. They didn't appreciate me at all. And I wanted to play with girls."

Most of the girls who pleaded with the board play ice hockey with the West Seneca Wings or the Buffalo Regals in the Girls Great Lakes Hockey League. But they said being able to represent their school on the ice was important to them.

"It would be pretty cool to be able to play and represent West Seneca," Nikki Kirchberger said.

The group presented the board the names of 29 girls at West Seneca East and West high schools who would be interested in playing varsity ice hockey. That would be enough to field one team, they said. Outside the meeting, parents said fielding a single team would cost the district \$15,000 to \$20,000.

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. Nichols already has a girls team. A number of other local schools are considering the prospect.

West Seneca School Board members listened to the girls and parents during the public comment portion of the meeting but did not indicate whether the board would support a girls ice hockey team. The board generally does not respond to comments from the public during meetings.

After the meeting, Superintendent Jean M. Kovach declined to comment, saying any decision on fielding a team would be up to the board. Carol

A. Jarczyk, board president, also declined to comment, saying the matter would be up to all seven members of the board, which has not yet discussed the issue.

Both women, however, said they had responded to inquiries from parents and students.

"I have been in communication with more than one of their supporters," Kovach said. "I know it sounded like we haven't been, but that's not the case."

David G. Smaczniak, the board's vice president, said the board has not made a decision because it's too early.

"It is being investigated by our district and by Section VI," he said. "We haven't said no."