

**\$100 restaurant gift
certificate giveaway**
NOW – MARCH 31



Upload your resume here!

BuffaloJobFinder.com

In partnership with
YAHOO! hotjobs

THE BUFFALO NEWS

PRINT THIS

Updated: 02/17/09 06:21 AM

Williamsville rules out varsity hockey for girls

Despite players' pleas, School Board finds there is a lack of local competition

By Sandra Tan
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

The most heartfelt pleas on the part of girls and their parents last week didn't keep the Williamsville School Board from dropping plans for a girls ice hockey team next school year. For the second year in a row, the district is refusing to sponsor a varsity team because of a lack of local competition.

About a dozen girls who play recreational hockey in the Williamsville district attended last week's meeting in their jerseys.

In a scene reminiscent of 1970s-era push for gender equity in occupations and sports, the girls and their parents were armed with arguments for funding a girls team, even during one of the district's tightest budget years.

"Even if there aren't any existing funds, would you please reallocate the existing funding to give our girls the chance to play one or two or even three teams next year?" asked Helen Drew-Meosky, a volunteer parent coordinator for the cross-district effort to establish a girls league.

Williamsville has 70 girls who play recreational ice hockey and who will be varsity age next school year, she said.

Some of the most moving comments, however, came from the district's students.

"I want to make something of myself, and I don't want to just sit and let the boys play all the sports like that," said 14-year-old Megan Gramza, an eighth-grader at Casey Middle School, whose voice trembled at the microphone.

"Because if they can have it, why can't we have it?" she asked.

Typically, those who speak during the public comment period are met with silence, in keeping with the board's policy of not responding to speakers during the meeting.



Last week, however, board President William Freeman offered a rare response from the board.

“The issue is not one of funding; it is not one of money,” he said. “It is one of local competition.”

For the last two years, he said, the district has tried to take the lead in establishing a regional girls ice hockey league. But no other area public school district would commit to fielding a team.

In December, however, administrators for athletic programs in Williamsville, Amherst, Clarence, Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda, Sweet Home, Hamburg, Niagara Wheatfield, West Seneca and the Monsignor Martin Association met to discuss the idea of starting a regional league.

Drew-Meosky and other parents have since criticized this task force, called the Western New York Girls Ice Hockey Study Committee, for giving parents the silent treatment, shutting them out of meetings and holding few meetings at all.

Even if a girls league isn't ready next year, parents asked the district to consider hosting at least a few games within the district or with one or two other area schools.

Speaker Ann Marie Gajewski said she has four daughters who play ice hockey, two of whom attend Catholic schools. She said she still saw opportunities for Williamsville to participate in interscholastic competition with the Catholic school system.

“I'd hate like heck for that first bump of the head on that glass ceiling to be in high school for these girls,” Gajewski said.

Freeman and Superintendent Howard Smith said they want to hear recommendations from the study committee this summer to see how the district should proceed. The group is expected to meet again in March, Smith said.

stan@buffnews.com

Find this article at:

<http://www.buffalonews.com/cityregion/story/581591.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

2008 The Buffalo News.