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THE BUFFALO NEWS

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NORTH TONAWANDA HIGH SCHOOL

Board backs varsity hockey for 2009-10

By Paul Westmoore
NEWS NIAGARA BUREAU

NORTH TONAWANDA — After a 30- year hiatus, North Tonawanda High School will once again field a boys varsity hockey team next season.

After more than an hourlong discussion Tuesday night — which included some campaigning by the city's club hockey coaches and parents — the School Board voted unanimously to submit the paperwork to add a North Tonawanda High School team to the Western New York High School Hockey Federation League.

“We’re going to have a varsity hockey team,” a delighted Jeff Swan, the club team’s assistant varsity hockey coach, said after witnessing the vote.

Much of the discussion centered on whether there would be enough money to cover the \$33,790 cost of running a varsity team.

Several hockey parents said that there should be no problem raising money and that a sports boosters club would find ways to raise the money if the school district is unable to foot all or part of the bill.

The vote went through because the federation has to know by Thursday whether North Tonawanda plans to field a team since initial planning for the 2009-10 season begins this week.

It was questionable at one point whether the board would smile on the program when board President Christine Porto asked Gregory Witman, the district’s athletic director, whether the district would have time to see if it can come up with the money to fund a team and, if not, whether it could withdraw at no penalty.

Witman left the boardroom, contacted a federation officer by telephone and was told the district could withdraw from the league before scheduling of ice time begins in late spring or early summer.

The board action will make North Tonawanda the sixth district in this immediate area to field a federation hockey team. The others are Kenmore West, Kenmore East, Niagara Falls, Lockport and Niagara Wheatfield high schools.

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Board member Michael Carney said North Tonawanda had a varsity team in the 1970s that the School Board decided to eliminate.

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