

Andover hockey rink project will not be finished this winter

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by Eric Hagen

Staff writer

People driving on Crosstown Boulevard have probably noticed a lot of activity happening in the open field just west of Andover City Hall.

Class 5 aggregate base left over from other projects was placed by Andover public works employees, but additional work would need to happen if the city wants to flood the three rinks this winter. The ultimate goal is two of these rinks would be constructed as hockey rinks with boards and the other rink would be used by skaters. Light poles could potentially be added. The Andover Youth Hockey Association is in the process of raising funds for this project, so it will not be fully completed this winter. Photo by Eric Hagen

A water treatment plant expansion is progressing, but another project that includes three outdoor rinks will take some time to complete.

The Andover Youth Hockey Association will be responsible for financing the bulk of the project and it is still raising funds, according to association president Tony Howard.

The project is more than three outdoor rinks, two of which would be for hockey and one for skating. Howard said the association wants to put boards up around the two hockey rinks and it wants a warming house and lights to allow the association extended hours to use the new ice.

Howard previously said at a Feb. 24 council workshop meeting that the additional two rinks would ideally give the association 1,000 hours of ice depending on the weather. The association also leases time at the one indoor hockey rink at the nearby Andover Community Center, and it also rents ice time at the Anoka Ice Arena and the Schwan's Super Rink in Blaine. With membership growing, Howard told the council that more ice is needed.

He once talked about possibly adding on to the Andover Community Center to have an indoor rink. The two outdoor hockey rinks would delay the need for this.

Funding to make this possible takes time. The goal is to complete the project by next winter, Howard said.

The city has already used Class 5 aggregate left over from other road projects to place the base of the rinks. The city's public works department could have potentially flooded the three rinks this winter, but that would have required the additional work of sloping the edges of the ponds, and City Administrator Jim Dickinson said this will not happen so the rinks will not be able to be used until at least next winter.

Dickinson updated the council on this project during a workshop meeting. He said if the association does not have the funding to complete the project, it should wait so the work is not partially completed and the city has to step in to finish it.

"I'm of the opinion to say, you don't start unless you've got the commitment to finish," Dickinson said.

The concept of adding the three outdoor rinks came up for discussion at the Feb. 24 council meeting. The city's idea was building these rinks would justify the elimination of the hockey rink and skating rink at Hawkridge Park in northern Andover and thus save the city money by not having to transport equipment and water to Hawkridge when flooding and maintaining the rinks.

Nothing will change at Hawkridge Park this winter because the Andover Parks Commission continues to explore options such as constructing additional soccer fields, which the Andover City Council would ultimately have to agree with.

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