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AMHERST

Board urged to approve high school girls hockey team

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A group of teen and preteen girls and their parents have asked the Amherst Central School Board to create a varsity high school girls ice hockey team for the 2008-09 school year.

Six female club hockey players and four parents made the request during Tuesday's meeting of the board.

Parent Isabelle Posner said the club hockey players decided to come before the board after the Williamsville School District announced it would consider fielding a team.

Williamsville, however, dropped the plan, it was announced during a meeting of the board Tuesday night.

In light of the 35th anniversary of Title IX this year, Posner said, the time seems right to consider adding the new sport to the Amherst High School offerings.

"It is interesting to note that the boys here have twice the number of winter sports choices to participate in than the girls do," Posner said. "I know that wasn't done on purpose, but it is something to note."

Several of the girls said they play club hockey or have played on coed teams with boys. However, they said, coed play in checking leagues can be too physical for many girls. Other girls told stories of having to dress in a separate locker room, apart from their team and frequently missing out on locker room talks from coaches.

Posner said there are about 150 girls currently competing in the club hockey program.

"What bothers me is when the girls get to age 16, there are very few options on where they can go, except play with the boys," said parent Pat Mallon, whose daughter currently plays on a youth coed team. "When my daughter gets older, it would be nice if she had somewhere else to play hockey."

Superintendent Laura Chabe said she has begun looking in to the logistics of creating a girls ice hockey team and said she has spoken with Williamsville Superintendent Howard Smith.

Chabe said Smith and others she has spoken to have struggled to find other girls teams to compete against. Chabe

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said she was impressed with the statements made by the girls and their parents and promised to continue investigating on whether a girls varsity hockey team can be a viable winter sport offering.

The board also unanimously approved the appointment of Gregory K. Kern to a three-year probationary team as school business administrator, effective Feb. 11. Kern will replace Mark Whyte, who has accepted the position of assistant superintendent.

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