

Rochester Sports Foundation

Board Meeting Minutes (9-26-25)

This was a joint meeting with board members and staff from Rochester Sports and Rochester Sports Foundation. It was called to order by Chris Terry at 12:02 PM. RSF Board members Terry, Joe Powers, Carole Shulman, Kelly Nowicki, Pat Sexton, Becca Tesch and staff Ed Hruska were present with Doug Holtan joining via phone. Chad Behnken was absent. RSF Advisory members Ben Boldt, Steve Strickland and Marshall Behrens were present. RS staff Matt Esau, Jessica Carlson, Bryant Schmidt and Tony Grabowske with Exec Board Members Mike Lester, Ryan Keller, Kristine Ihrke were present.

The August meeting minutes were reviewed previous to the meeting via email along with the Statement of Activities. There were no comments or corrections Powers moved, Sexton seconded and they were passed unanimously in block via email.

Matt Esau gave an update on the progress to date of Rochester Sports. He expressed thanks to the City and RSF for the effort in moving the new RSRC forward – which will benefit the community for years to come. Hruska updated the group on how the RSF was formed to compliment RS and why. He suggested holding RS/RSF meetings annually moving forward. Terry gave the group an RSF update – touching on the current process of hiring the new Director as well as the future direction of RSF.

Next the group discussed the idea of creating an Umpire Academy to address the umpire shortage today and into the future. The why is based on the lack of quality referees/officials as the various sports grow and create more demand. Esau shared recent challenges now with baseball referee shortages and is concerned with the number of future larger tournaments with RSRC coming online. Nowicki added that RYSA works hard at training youth as soccer refs and has learned that focusing on holding fans accountable for their actions – which reduces the stress on young officials developing in this area. Behrens added that some sports groups hire a person to be onsite to address unruly fans. Lester added that there is no umpire/ref program at RCTC but could be added to their sports management program. Esau reviewed a “Behind the Mask” PowerPoint that outlined the details of the program with the group. This is a program done by a group out of Owatonna. Nowicki suggested we reach out to local youth sports organizations to see which groups may join in this effort. Boldt added that some sports do a much better job of supporting their new officials better than others – which is an important component. Everyone felt it was a worthwhile investment and that both RS and RSF will work on this moving forward.

RCTC sports bubble: Its future was discussed next. Esau identified two issues, 1) cost of the put up/tear down, 2) the purchasing of replacement materials and equipment cost. Lester stated the bubble is a major factor in RCTC recruiting for various sports. Hruska shared some history and its original success. He reminded the group this was a major financial investment by the City and it should never go away because of mismanagement. Boldt updated the group on progress to date as there is a team meeting regularly to find a viable solution.

Selling the new RSRC facility: Boldt updated the group on the timeline to get a new operator on board – which will go a long way in determining the sales process. Esau shared their team is already working on potential events and look forward to working with the new operator.

Funding Agreement: Esau stated that RS will continue to honor the annual financial contribution to RSF as long as their funding continues.

Working with local sports organizations: Esau shared their efforts in this and suggested he and the new RSF Director could meet with all groups individually to build relationship and gather feedback. The idea of a Junior Board was discussed and supported. **The meeting was adjourned at 1:38 PM**

Next Meeting: Annual Meeting: December 4th, 4:30 PM at the Hubbell House (Gus Room)