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Moscow council grants ice rink crowd's wishes

Plan for new facility moves forward

By **CHELSEA EMBREE**
OF THE TRIBUNE

MOSCOW — Dozens of kids sporting red and black Palouse Bears hockey jerseys were not disappointed Monday night.

The Moscow City Council chambers was packed to standing-room only, the crowd overflowing into the hallway and the kids onto the floor in front of the council as they unanimously voted to move forward with plans for a new Palouse Ice Rink. The city and the rink association will next work on a contract granting \$1 million from the city's Hamilton Fund to construct a new rink.

The room vibrated with applause at the decision.

"I think that we can say, without a doubt, that

that money, that million dollars, would be well spent if we can do something to help these kids," City Councilor Jon Weber said.

Tony Mangini, vice president of the ice rink, presented the request to the council Monday night for funding to go toward building a \$3.6 million rink that will feature a full-size sheet of ice housed in a permanent building. The current rink, built 15 years ago, has a three-quarters size sheet of ice covered by a temporary canvas tent.

"It just has reached a point where we need a bigger facility to fulfill the mission that we've had from the beginning, which is to offer a full se-

> See **ICE RINK**, page 3C

ICE RINK: Present facility brings in many people

> Continued from PAGE 1C

lection of resources and ice-related activities," Mangini said.

The rink's hockey and figure skating programs suffer from the limitations of the size of the rink, Mangini said. Sound issues and the weather also restrict the rink's hours of operation, and the current facility lacks indoor plumbing.

As "primitive" as the Palouse Ice Rink is, Mangini said it still brings in many people from the region. He added that while winters can be long on the Palouse, it can be challenging to find recreation in the off-season.

"The ice rink is really one of the few (resources) we have that's there for everybody," Mangini said.

Mangini said the rink serves an important function, with its adult programs complementing youth programs and encouraging kids to stay involved.

Expanding the rink would also make Moscow a site for youth hockey tournaments, he added.

Palouse Ice Rink Board member Anna Lim-Mikkelsen said 40 percent of the rink's current revenue is generated by the Palouse Youth

"It's obvious that it's within the parameters of the Hamilton bequest."

COUNCILOR JIM BOLAND

Hockey Association.

The focus on activities for kids is a key stipulation of the Hamilton Fund. The trust, which was recently used to help pay for development of Moscow's play fields, was set up to be used for parks and recreation purposes for the benefit of young children.

"It's obvious that it's within the parameters of the Hamilton bequest," City Councilor Jim Boland said. "I'm very much in support of it."

City Supervisor Gary Riedner said Moscow gave the Palouse Ice Rink \$165,000 from the trust when the rink first built its temporary structure. The fund, comprised of public money, hasn't been used for private purposes since, Riedner

said, noting with that usage comes additional conditions that should be considered.

City Councilor Art Bettge suggested priorities should be how long the money from the Hamilton Fund could be accessed, guaranteeing a high level of youth activity, determining what happens to the property if the ice rink association folds and ensuring that construction of the new rink will comply with city ordinances.

"If those can be worked out between the city and the ice rink, then I see no reason why this should not go forward," Bettge said.

The next steps will be for representatives from the city and the Palouse Ice Rink to meet and discuss the conditions, Riedner said. Once an agreement is reached, the rink association can bring that to the city's committees to consider the \$1 million withdrawal from the Hamilton Fund. The final product will be a written resolution that the city council must vote on, Riedner said.

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