

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF  
COMMISSIONERS OF THE FARGO PARK DISTRICT AS OF  
JANUARY 27, 2006**

A special meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Park District of the City of Fargo was held on Friday, January 27, 2006 at 11:00 a.m. at the Fargo Park District office at 701 Main Avenue, Fargo, North Dakota. Present at the meeting were Commissioners Brad Wimmer, Joel Vettel, Tom Barnhart and Linda Inniger. Also present were Roger G. Gress, Attorney Greg Selbo, James Larson, Clay Whittlesey, Carolyn Boutain, Erick Johnson and Amy Rasmussen. Absent were Commissioner Barb Johnson and Chris Kennelly, Clerk

**Discussion on the installation of safety netting at the Fargo Coliseum**

Roger G. Gress began by reviewing the past experience with the safety netting installed at the Southwest Youth Ice Arena (netting completely surrounds both rinks and we have had no injuries to the public in the stands). Gress described three serious injuries that occurred during FM Jets games in 2005. In order to protect the public from further injury, Gress made a decision to provide safety to the public and thus authorized the netting to be installed (same netting that was used at the Southwest Youth Ice Arena).

Dave Bjugson, a hockey enthusiast and hockey coach addressed the board in support of the netting. He has visited several area hockey rinks, all of which have netting around the rink or higher glass. The plexiglass in the Coliseum is lower due to the rink itself being set approximately two feet lower than the concourse around the rink.

Rick Graalum addressed the board and indicated he is working to help the Jets solve the problem they have with the netting. Mr. Graalum has a son who plays for the FM Jets so he attends several games at the Coliseum. Mr. Graalum stated he has never seen netting completely surround a hockey rink. Hockey is a sport where fans need to see and partake in the game. It is their intention to keep the Jets games a family event, but they do not want to distract the avid fan from enjoying the fast paced game. Mr. Graalum described areas that could be netted and would like to look at some of the danger spots. He proposed to look how to improve the current situation: 1). How to cut down on injuries; 2). Improve the look of the netting; 3). Develop a family section to sit behind netting. Mr. Graalum asked to be able to meet with Park District staff and the Board to come up with a solution.

Julie Volk addressed the board; she is the mother of one of the young girls seriously injured during an FM Jets game in November 2005. Her daughter was hit in the mouth with a puck that flew at her so fast that no one had time to react or try to stop it. She lost a tooth and suffered severe trauma to her mouth, which in turn will require years of costly medical and dental attention. Mrs. Volk commended the Park District for doing the right thing by installing the netting.

Dan Huffman, representing the Fargo School System, and as a hockey parent, noted he too has visited several hockey rinks. The Fargo Schools utilize the Park District ice arenas and Huffman indicated they would be willing to offer assistance with finding a long-term solution. As a renter of the facilities, the School District will respect any decision the Park Board makes.

Tom Halstenson, a local businessman and a parent of one of the FM Jets players requested the netting remain in the corners and around the curve to the face-off area where most of the problems with flying pucks happen. The Jets will put up notices (signage) at the games indicating the danger of flying pucks. He expressed the need to keep fans and spectators safe yet be able to enjoy the game. He recommended raising the netting and open the middle spectator area on the east side of rink.

Jeff Volk, Julie Volk's husband, felt the netting is the cheapest and safest solution. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the FM Jets organization and how poorly this situation has been handled.

Jim Christopher, an affiliate with the FM Jets, commented he has researched on the web and the NHL uses a black net which extends around the curve to the face-off area. He understands, as a spectator, he may be injured when he goes to a hockey game. Mr. Christopher commented there is currently a non-alcohol section at the Coliseum, which could also serve as the area protected behind the netting.

Randy Nielsen, general manager of the FM Jets requested the Board consider a compromise and leave the netting on the ends and around the corners of the rink and raise the two side sections for the remainder of the Jets hockey season.

Commissioner Inniger commended Roger for being safety conscious. Commissioner Inniger made a motion to roll up for the FM Jets games, lower it for all other games and then re-evaluate the situation again at the end of the season. Commissioner Wimmer seconded the motion.

Further discussion included Commissioner Wimmer questioning the feasibility of rolling it up for the Jets and lowering it for other games. Roger G. Gress indicated it would not be feasible; it either needs to be raised or left down. Commissioner Wimmer asked if the netting could be installed on the ends around the curve to the face off circles.

Erick Johnson, manager of the Park District ice arenas, commented the netting is in four sections and plastic tied up the seams and could be removed on each side.

Commissioner Vettel also commended Gress and staff for making safety the first and foremost priority.

Commissioner Barnhart noted he would like the netting to remain where it is all around the rink.

Commissioner Vettel amended the current motion to state leave the netting down on three-quarters of the rink and remove the east panel, from player door to player door, and do not bring the east panel up and down. Commissioner Inniger and Wimmer agreed to the amendment. Upon roll call, Commissioner Wimmer, Vettel and Inniger voted yes and Commissioner Barnhart voted no.

Attorney Greg Selbo commented the current agreement is sufficient for the liability issues.

Meeting was duly adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Respectfully submitted by;

Amy Rasmussen  
Fargo Park District