

To: CIAC Board of Control
From: E.O. Smith and Tolland High School administration and athletics
Re: One-year co-op hockey phase out
Date: August 10, 2018

Request for a second year phase out of the E.O. Smith/Tolland hockey co-op program

In September of 2017, the E.O. Smith/Tolland ice hockey co-op was notified the program was being placed on a one-year phase out to disband beginning with the 2018-19 season. We are appealing to the CIAC Board of Control for a second year of phase out status as permitted in the CIAC by-laws. This would put our disbandment in effect for the 2019-20 season.

It is our belief we should have been issued a two-year phase out year as permitted in the CIAC by-laws and that this appeal is appropriate given the structure and history of our 25-year-old co-op. A second year would give us the necessary time to deal with important variables our schools would face with a co-op disbandment and to provide the best opportunity for a continued ice hockey experience for all of our student-athletes. It would also give an opportunity to present and discuss compelling information and data about our program and the current condition of co-op hockey that we believe supports changes to the current by-laws.

The rationale provided to support the decision to disband after a one-year phase out was based on projected E.O. Smith player participation. E.O. Smith and Tolland have been in a hockey co-op for 25 years and have never been asked to disband the program. Our collective numbers have always been stable, and relied on both schools to field both varsity and junior varsity programs. Based on current and projected participation numbers, E.O. Smith High School cannot sustain an ice hockey program on its own and continue to offer varsity and junior varsity opportunities and Tolland High School has no possibility of running an independent program. This will result in the collapse of the junior varsity program at E.O. Smith and limited co-op possibilities and significant logistical hardships for Tolland's players and parents. Therefore, if not overturned, this decision will leave both schools looking for other co-op programs to join and create an unnecessary period of confusion and uncertainty for our schools and lost participation opportunities for players.

Rationale for the request for a second year phase out period

Our first and most important reason for our request for an additional year stems from our desire to do all we can to continue to offer as comprehensive a program as possible. Unlike most hockey co-ops, for the past 25 years we have always encouraged involvement in our program at a developmental level by offering a junior varsity (j.v.) experience. If the co-op is disbanded, then our j.v. offering will cease to exist and we would have to cancel ten hockey games for kids who otherwise will not have a place to play. This will also diminish competitive opportunities for the small number of opposing schools who run j.v. programs. This seems contrary to the *#myreasonwhy* campaign supported by the CIAC.

Second, we present comparisons from our program to two other programs that were also given a one-year phase out period. In 2016, the Suffield-Granby-Windsor Locks (SGWL) co-op was disbanded as a result of a decision rendered by the CIAC Board of Control. The circumstances leading up to this programs disbandment do not align with our past and current situation. At the Board of Control meeting in April, 2017, in reaching a decision to uphold the phase out of the Suffield-Granby-Windsor Locks program, the Board took note that the CIAC Co-op Committee made the decision to follow through with the phase out after SGWL's numbers remained high through multiple phase-outs. As described in the highlighted section of the April 27th minutes below, SGWL has been "consistently over the allowed participation

numbers during a series of phase outs." In our case, this is our first notification of phase out in our 25-year history, and we were allotted one year instead of two. This causes us to question the equity of the decision to issue our program a one-year phase out, and the criterion used to make these decisions.

1.8 Appeal of Cooperative Team Committee Decision – SGWL Boys Ice Hockey – The Board considered an appeal of a decision by the Cooperative Team Committee regarding the status of the SGWL (Suffield-Granby-Windsor Locks) boys ice hockey co-op. The Committee determined due to being over the allowed number of athletes on its application that the co-op should be phased out and would not be permitted to compete in the 2017-18 school year. The Board considered information that the Committee decided to rule for the phase out after the team had consistently been over the allowed participation numbers during a series of phase outs. Representatives of the three schools presented the appeal suggesting changes in enrollment for the schools in the coming years would put them under the allowed participation numbers in the future, and that the program has been a great benefit to all involved. Motion to deny the appeal of the Cooperative Team Committee decision – M. Ryan / B. Smith – Approved.

Of the 14 requests for renewal last year, 11 were approved while 3 programs were issued phase outs of one or two years. In addition to E.O. Smith/Tolland and SGWL, there is the case of New Fairfield/Immaculate. Immaculate is a choice school with a strong hockey tradition. After a comparatively brief period in a co-op with New Fairfield, Immaculate has restored its hockey program and clearly stated its intention to operate independently. The Farmington co-op, which consists of four schools, was granted a two-year phase out. While its overall numbers are slightly lower, varsity player numbers are comparable. The Farmington co-op does not offer a j.v. program and does not provide access to a broad number of students. Please see the complete list of ice hockey co-op programs with the programs identified highlighted below.

Fitch / East Lyme / Hale Ray / Ledyard / Waterford / Wheeler / Stonington / Griswold – Ice Hockey – approved for two years (2017-18, 2018-19)
E.O. Smith / Tolland – Ice Hockey – approved for one year phase out (2017-18)
Jonathan Law / Foran / Platt Tech. – Ice Hockey – approved for two years (2017-18, 2018-19)
Wm. Hall / Southington – Ice Hockey – approved for two years (2017-18, 2018-19)
Newington / Berlin / Cromwell / Manchester – Ice Hockey – approved for two years (2017-18, 2018-19)
Enfield / East Granby / Stafford – Ice Hockey – approved for two years (2017-18, 2-18-17)
New Fairfield / Immaculate – Ice Hockey – approved for a one year phase out (2017-18)
Suffield / Granby Memorial / Windsor Locks – Ice Hockey – approved for a one year opt out (2017-18)
Ellington / Somers / East Windsor – Ice Hockey – approved for two years (2017-18, 2018-19)
Wethersfield / Middletown / Rocky Hill / Plainville – Ice Hockey – approved for two years (2017-18, 2018-19)
Fairfield Warde / Fairfield Ludlowe – Ice Hockey – approved for two years (2017-18, 2018-19)
Norwalk / Brien McMahon – Ice Hockey – approved for one year (2017-18)
Housatonic Valley / N.W. Reg. / Wamogo – Ice Hockey – approved for two years (2017-18, 2018-19)
Farmington / Avon / Lewis Mills / Windsor – Ice Hockey – approved for a two year phase out (2017-18, 2018-19)

The third reason for our appeal to the CIAC Board of Control is based on our disagreement with the way the co-op committee applied section 11a of the CIAC by-laws in determining a one-year phase-out. Please see the by-laws below:

CIAC bylaws: Article 11a. "Dissolution of Co-op Teams" (p. 65 of CIAC Manual):

"The cooperative team committee has the authority to reduce a phase-out period to one year if the number of participants in the co-op exceeds or is close to exceeding two times the maximum allowed in the specific sport."

The number of participants in the E.O. Smith-Tolland co-op last year was 34. The maximum allowed in the sport is 30. 34 is nowhere near twice the maximum allowed, which is 60, according to the terminology in the by-laws. Even if the

figure is broken down by schools (which is not how the article is written in the handbook), E.O. Smith's number was 24. Twice the limit is 30. E.O. Smith was six players under this number. Referring back to our 25 year history, we feel this gap of six players should have afforded an additional year for a phase out. Total participation in the program, while varying slightly from year to year, averages 29.5 players over 13 years. In ten of those years, Tolland numbers have been higher than the E.O. Smith numbers. Please see the Analysis of Data packet enclosed for more detailed information.

In 2018-19, E.O. Smith will have 23 players eligible to compete next season (1 lost to an ACL injury). While 18 are returning, 9 players have never suited up in a varsity game. Four will be sophomores that may join the program next year and one is an incoming 9th grader. Overall, we will have 14 legitimate varsity players from E.O. Smith on our roster for next year. Because these are projections, we are asking for another year to confirm that our numbers are declining. In consultation with the Northeast Huskies youth program that operates in the UConn Ice Rink, we are told that due to low numbers, for the first time in years, they are not able to field either a bantam (gr 8-9) or peewee (gr 6-7) team next season. We are hoping to avoid disbandment for next season, knowing it is likely we will again be in search of a co-op for the 2019-20 season.

A fourth concern is what will happen to the Tolland High School players. Tolland forecasts having 7-10 players who currently have to find a team to join for the upcoming season. The Tolland athletic supervisor, Todd Zenczak, has spoken with his colleagues from all the local programs. Based on this feedback, the only realistic scenario is for these players to join Bolton-Coventry-Rockville-RHAM (BCR) co-op. BCR reports they have 25 returning players next year. Adding 10 from Tolland will move their totals to 35 with five participating schools. This will solve the problem of having 34 players and two participating schools? We do not feel this is an acceptable option and ask to have an additional year to find a solution that does not have possible negative ramifications for the Tolland families and those in the BCR and E.O. Smith programs.

We are also concerned about costs E.O. Smith will incur to an already high hockey budget as a result of Tolland leaving our program. The estimated increased cost to the operating budget for E.O. Smith will be \$10,000, plus funds to change uniforms. These funds are not currently in our budget and E.O. Smith does not have a pay-to-play policy. Region #19 (E.O. Smith's) superintendent has already stated that to offset these costs, our j.v. hockey program will be eliminated immediately if our co-op disbands.

Finally, we feel a lack of responsiveness and direction from CIAC personnel has led us to this point. After repeated requests to meet and discuss our situation, we are finally getting an opportunity to present our case on August 23, with a new school year fast-approaching. Upon receiving the letter from the co-op committee, we repeatedly asked for assistance. We spoke with CIAC officials in the fall, had direct communication again in March and April, when we were encouraged to develop a presentation of our situation and a written request for information about appealing in March and April. After compiling relevant data and presenting it, we received no feedback or conversation about its contents. We also asked if we could meet in Cheshire and meet face to face with the Co-op Committee Chair or the CIAC Director to discuss the variables of our co-op. This request was denied. Not until a reply from a CIAC official in May did we receive details as to how we could appeal. Now, nearly a full year after the decision, we are finally getting a chance to present our case. This is untimely given that the new school year is now upon us. We will provide copies of emails if requested, however, this is not the approach we wish to take. Rather, we would like to know the CIAC is in support in helping our co-op, with its history of broad access to student athletes, to stay intact.

The current condition of co-op ice hockey supports a review of the current by-laws

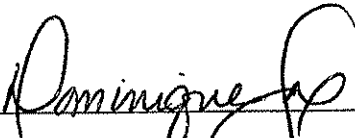
Ultimately, the CIAC should develop a formula that considers more factors in making decisions about the status of cooperative teams. Currently, 39% of hockey programs exist as co-ops, which is an increasing trend. This is a far higher percentage than any other sport (the next largest is football, at 13%). The CIAC should seek to better understand the variables that create this truth, and treat hockey as a separate entity with a more broad set of criterion when determining hockey co-op eligibility. Currently, the sole criteria for determining co-op eligibility is the number of players from each individual school along with the cumulative total.

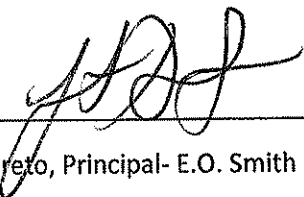
Additional criteria to be considered include:

- 1) Existence or promotion of a j.v. program.
- 2) Accessibility and proximity to ice rinks.
- 3) Future participation projections.
- 4) Total participants from each school.
- 5) Overall combined and individual school enrollments.
- 6) Competitive advantage.
- 7) Longevity and stability (number of participants and competitive record).
- 8) Financial implications.

Thank you for considering our request for a second phase out year for the E.O. Smith/Tolland co-op ice hockey program and we are hopeful for a formal review of the current criteria and condition of high school hockey co-op programs under the control of the CIAC.

Sincerely,

Signature  Date 8/15/18
Dominique Fox, Principal- Tolland High School

Signature  Date 8/15/18
Louis DeLoreto, Principal- E.O. Smith High School