

27 April 2021

Good day Park County Commissioners,

As a relatively new member of Livingston, over the past 3 winters, I've come to know that we're missing something... an ice rink.

I'm a native Minnesotan, and a long-time resident of SW Montana and occasional resident of arctic villages in both Alaska and Canada. In these different corners of the North, I've become keenly aware of the how ice rinks can transform and anchor communities. I'm also now familiar with what it's like to go without a rink.

As I travel around the state of Montana to hockey tournaments or sit on the sidelines of my son's soccer games, I can't help but talk ice rinks with people from small towns across our state. Tiny towns like Phillipsburg have great ice, Lewistown has a vibrant rink community, Glendive, Glasgow, Miles City, Red Lodge...they have rinks... and kids, families and adults have the opportunity to skate and break up the long winter season.

I'm likely preaching to the choir, you may agree that Livingston and the surrounding region is flush with spring, summer and fall recreation options, but in the winter there is plenty of room for improvement.

Our youth are increasingly obsessed with screens (the pandemic hasn't helped) and parent's are increasingly focused on alternatives to screens. What if our kid's and families' could skate mid-winter at our Fairgrounds without the cost prohibitive expense of a Bridger Bowl pass or another white-knuckle drive over the pass to shuttle a kid to skate or play hockey at Hayne's Pavilion?

Our subcommittee is made up of two PCFB board members and two private citizens. We have been gauging the level of interest from the community for an indoor rink. Many people and organizations we have spoken to have responded with enthusiasm to the idea. There are so many diverse people in the community that could be served through a skating rink. Our Rink Rats committee has been tasked by the PCFPB to come up with a plan to promote our mission to provide "...recreational opportunities to Park County residents..." by taking an underutilized winter resource (Steer Barn #1) and turning it into a winter recreational gathering place.

The Rink Rats committee has been working closely with Matt Whitman and Morgan Squires to spearhead a vision, as well as a maintenance plan for a 32' x 75' rink inside the existing Steer Barn #1. In numerous discussions with members from LISA (Livingston Ice Skating Association) that were the movers and shakers that created the outdoor Livingston rinks of yesteryear, we have tried to learn from their successes as well as their setbacks. We believe that an 8-10 week season is very realistic (Christmas to early March). A relevant side note, LISA was actively hoping to use Steer Barn #1 years ago and recorded average temperatures of 10-20F cooler inside compared to outside. They were unable to secure access for a Steer Barn rink at that time. Eventually LISA's outdoor rink was seen as impractical due to a lack of shady site availability (Waterworks Park) and marginal outdoor temperatures (sun baked Civic Center). We are eager to build upon the groundwork laid by past community members.

We are requesting \$15,000 for a full set of boards and rink liner that will be serviceable for years. Once we have a few years under our belt, we have bigger dreams of a bigger ice surface, but this great beginning will bring life, laughter and energy to a rather sleepy winter fairgrounds.

We will eagerly answer questions and provide greater detail at your request. We are also happy to provide many local letters of support for this project.

Thanks for considering our mission driven request and please help us ...Make Livingston Skate Again!

Sincerely,

Steve Van Slyke Chairman of the Rink Rats Committee & PCFPB member
At the request of the Park County Fairgrounds and Parks Board