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Marauders may stay in Swanzey

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SWANZEY CENTER — Just when it looked like the Monadnock Regional School District was going to sideline the Monadnock Marauders' home games at Monadnock High School, one board member's calling for a time out.

At its July 21 meeting, the school board decided to raise the Marauders' rental fee and tell the semi-professional football team it could no longer use the high school's field after this year.

Board member Robert Smith of Swanzey says he's planning to ask the board to reconsider these decisions.

The school board's vote came less than two weeks before the Marauders' first home game at Monadnock this Saturday.

Instead of paying \$3,000 for the season, as it has for several years, the team would now be charged \$1,000 per game.

The contract the school board reviewed at the meeting — which would allow the team to play at the high school and practice on another field in the district — said the team will play between four and six home games.

However, General Manager William R. Hope Jr. told The Sentinel the Marauders will play between five and seven.

"No one discussed it with any of us," Coach Michael A. Salce said.

As for whether the team can swing this price hike, Hope said, "It's a nonprofit organization, so we can afford to do it until we run out of money."

If the team's subject to a per-game fee, he added, "What that would mean was we just wouldn't play all of our games at Monadnock. We wouldn't want to incur that expense at the detriment of some of the



Marauder Dave Prutzanni gets taken down by a hand to the helmet during a game against the Connecticut Spartans in Swanzey Center in 2007.



things that we do.”

Smith was one of four board members in a narrow vote who supported the contract changes.

“By the time that our kids take the field in September, that field is used pretty hard,” he said at the July 21 meeting. “It can’t recover in time.”

Eric S. Stanley of Swanzey also voted for the new contract conditions and questioned the team’s level of volunteerism in the district.

“You see the Marauders participating in a lot of activities throughout the community. ... I don’t see them participating in a lot of events here — helping out,” he said at the meeting. “Do we know that they do? I see them in Keene all the time. ... I don’t see them here.”

High school Principal Brian S. Pickering said at the meeting that he didn’t have specifics about this.

However, he said, “I think that’s probably an accurate statement. ... I recall early on there being a little bit more involvement here.”

But since that meeting, Smith said he’s learned about “oodles” of ways the Marauders pitch in.

Thousands of dollars have been given to the Monadnock football and baseball teams through the Monadnock Marauders Seth Clark Memorial, named for a former Marauders player and Monadnock alumnus who was killed in a car crash in 2005.

Monadnock students are also sent to football camp in honor of Clark, according to Hope.

Salce said the team pitches in on a variety of causes, such as Special Olympics and Big Brothers Big Sisters, that cross town lines.

“It’s basically whoever asks us to help them out,” Hope said.

Several years ago, the Monadnock district agreed to accept less per year in rental fees than the \$5,000 the Marauders originally paid, according to Hope.

But when this shift happened, it was accompanied by the donation of new goal posts, at a cost of about \$8,000, through the Monadnock Marauders Seth Clark Memorial.

Meanwhile, Hope said the Marauders team has provided athletics opportunities to a slew of Monadnock graduates.

As for the reported field destruction, both Hope and Salce refuted this.

“We’ve never received not a verbal complaint, not a written complaint, not an e-mail” of concern about the field, Hope said.

Smith said he would welcome the Marauders at Monadnock in the future and will ask the school board to reconsider this and other terms of the contract.

“I feel bad with what was done, but I feel confident that it can be resolved,” he said.

Superintendent Kenneth R. Dassau described the need for the school board to be given accurate information about the Marauders’ work in the community — information he said was difficult to provide at the last meeting in part because the contract objections were unexpected.

“If we had known there was going to be an issue ... I would have been seeking to have a representative for the Marauders present,” Dassau said. “I think they’ll be prepared to be present at the next meeting,

and I think we'll straighten it all out."

Hope said he similarly got this impression through speaking with Smith.

"We, of course, we can't wait on that," he said. "We've already looked into playing at Brattleboro and Keene also."

Regardless, Hope — who said Marauders officials have yet to sign the school board's altered contract — said the team needs to keep its Aug. 1 home game at Monadnock.

"We've already spent hundreds of dollars printing materials," Hope said. "Printing signs to hang up around town ... the programs have already gone to print. All of our tickets say all home games play at Monadnock ... "

As for the contract ordeal, he said, "I think that perhaps there was just some misunderstanding by some of the people on the school board. ... (They) weren't as well informed as they probably are now."

u The Monadnock Regional School Board's next meeting is scheduled for Aug. 11 at 7 p.m. at Monadnock Regional Middle/High School.

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