

WINCHESTER HOCKEY PARENTS ASSOCIATION, INC.

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING

January 12, 2009

Attendees Directors - Tom Troiano, Hugh Mullin, Jim Kiley, Steve Tucci, Roland Goff, Erick Knutzen, Bill Redler, Brud Houllahan, John Addonizio, Chris Parker, Denis O'Donnell, Steve Keating.
Members - Dennis Delaney; Michael Drew, Jim McGowan, Nancy Lehrer, Peter Albert, Tim Locke.

Vice-President Tom Troiano opened the meeting at 7:06 PM. By a poll of WYH Board of Directors members present, it was determined that a quorum was present to allow for the transaction of Winchester Youth Hockey business.

Minutes from December Meeting

The Minutes of the November meeting were reviewed. Tom Troiano stated that the Treasurer's Report should note that the notice from the Attorney General's Office about annual filings was sent to a defunct organization. Jim Kiley made a motion to accept the Minutes of the December meeting incorporating Tom's edit. Chris Parker provided the second for the motion, and it ~~was n~~ was unanimously approved by the Board and entered into the record.

Treasurer's Report

Jim Kiley presented the Treasurer's Report as follows.

WYH was making all the regularly scheduled payments for ice and league fees. WYH is still owed approximately \$20,000.00 in tuitions that were due on December 12, 2008. The Winchester Savings Bank on-line statement showed a checking account balance of \$10,467.13. The balance in the 12 month Certificate of Deposit is \$158,146.73 and the rolling 6 month CD has a balance of \$50,550.98. The total cash on hand for the corporation is \$219,164.84.

Denis O'Donnell made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report. Hugh Mullin seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

Coaches Committee

The Coaches Committee had no issues to report.

Dual State League

Chris Parker noted the Pee Wee B team is requesting a move up after going 12-0-1 over the past two months.

Valley League

Roland Goff reported that WYH must confirm that the VL will assume responsibility for rescheduling a Girls game that was posted with only one day notice. Also, the Midget full season

team is scheduled to play 6 games after 9:30PM on week nights which is not acceptable considering school commitments. David Hennessey will request that the VL not schedule many late night week day games.

Learn to Skate and Learn to Play Hockey

Currently the web based registration process does not allow registration for more than one program. Parents who wish to sign up their child for a second session of Learn to Skate should contact David Hennessey or Tom Troiano.

Cheever Program

Tom Troiano reported that the program is going well. WYH informed Mass Hockey that it would be applying for a grant to cover the 2009-2010 hockey season. The deadline for the application is February 1, 2009. Tom noted that based on email conversations with parents that he expects at least 10- 15 players from the Cheever program to participate in other WYH programs during the 2009-2010 hockey season.

Mass Hockey/District 9

The seeding for the District 9 play downs went very smoothly due to the fact that most teams play in the VL and seeding reflected the standings. The District 9 play down brackets have been distributed to the coaches.

Erik Knutzen reported that all supplemental rosters are completed and will be delivered to the coaches. Also, rosters for the Learn to Play Hockey and Full Season Midget teams have been completed. Jim Kiley reminded everyone that coach need to bring their stamped rosters and supplements to all play down games.

Erik also informed the Board that CORI checks are being completed for all new coaches.

Girls-Only Travel Hockey

Tom Troiano stated that girls' skill sessions have not been well attended. Steve Tucci replied that there are many schedule conflicts between skills and league games. There have also been some issues with the level of the drills as well as the tempo of the drills. Tom Troiano noted that it's difficult to run a high tempo practice with 5 skaters and he suggested that we may want to consider another night for girls skills next season. Hugh Mullin suggested Monday night.

Erik Knutzen told the Board that he had requested that play down games for the girls not be scheduled on the days normally reserved for high school games.

Ice Committee

Tom Troiano told Board members that the February ice schedule would be out within a week. He also noted that the Flynn is scheduled to close on March 20, 2009, so it is likely placement will be held the two weeks prior to closure. Tom noted that this could be moved up a week to accommodate a placement announcement date in late March. Most Directors agreed that this was a good idea although no vote was taken.

In response to comments about the number of days that the Flynn Rink has been closed this season, Denis O'Donnell remarked that the Zamboni at the Flynn as well as problems with the compressor are reasons why WYH helped establish the "Friends of the Flynn" which could serve as an entity to purchase or lease the Flynn if that option is ever offered.

Marketing/Fundraising Committee

John Addonizio reported that ticket sales for the Comedy Night fundraiser were on-going, and there is an expectation that sales will pick up now that the holidays are over.

New Business/Updates

The Chris Parker sponsored shooting challenge has been completed. Michael Houllahan won the contest and an autographed Bobby Orr stick for averaging 571 shoots per week for 6 weeks. Chris reported that will a little more lead time participation would probably increase. Jim Kiley noted that the Pee Wee A team enthusiastically participated and Denis O'Donnell remarked that this was a good idea that should be repeated.

Tom Troiano noted that the Girls U14 A and the Boys/Open "A" level Coaches must be approved at the February meeting prior to placements. Tom said that he and David Hennessey would be nominating a slate of coaches in February. Tom noted that anyone interested in these coaching positions should submit a coaching application form as soon as possible.

Marketing Committee Presentation

The Marketing Committee made a presentation to the Board about its report on attracting and retaining participation in WYH. The Power Point Presentation is attached to these minutes.

Adjournment

Denis O'Donnell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Jim Kiley and unanimously approved by the Board. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Winchester Youth Hockey Board of Directors is scheduled for Monday February 23, 2009, 7:00PM in the Winchester Room of the Town Hall.

Winchester Youth Hockey

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING PLAYERS

Winchester Youth Hockey Marketing Committee

January 12, 2009



Winchester Youth Hockey

Agenda

Project Team

Current State

Research Process

Methodology

What We Heard

Possible Initiatives

Engagement / Visibility

Program Options

Enhanced Coaching

Management Structure

Recommendations

Open Discussion

Next Steps



Winchester Youth Hockey

Project Team

Governance	Winchester Youth Hockey Board
Sponsor	Dave Hennesey
Owner (Marketing Committee)	John Addonizio
	Brud Houllahan
	Steve Keating
	Hugh Mullin
	Carl Pasciuto
Stakeholders	Nancy Lehrer
	Ann McCarthy



Winchester Youth Hockey

Current State

- **Winchester Youth Hockey** is recognized as one of the top programs in the state.
- **Winchester Youth Hockey** recognizes that the market is changing. Competition from select hockey programs, other sports, family time constraints, and the economy is having an impact on our program.
- **Winchester Youth Hockey** is committed to providing a product that allows the program to grow while retaining it's players and families.
- **Winchester Youth Hockey** Marketing Committee was formed to explore and make recommendations to the Board of Winchester Youth Hockey. At the request of the Winchester Youth Hockey President, the committee will explore the following two items.
 1. Develop a plan to maintain a strong flow of young children into our Learn to Skate and Learn to Play Hockey programs.
 2. Develop a plan to retain more players once they are in our program, particularly at the PeeWee level where competition from outside programs seems to be the greatest.



Winchester Youth Hockey

YOUTH HOCKEY ANNUAL ENROLLMENT

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
WINCHESTER						
BOYS/OPEN HOCKEY	319	306	317	291	243	231
GIRLS HOCKEY	51	44	47	53	50	56
LTS	80	72	72	68	89	62
TOTAL	450	422	436	412	382	349
PARTICIPATION RATE	12.67%	11.31%	11.26%	10.35%	9.50%	8.43%
USA HOCKEY	373,644	369,271	355,156	353,505	350,983	
WINCH. SCHOOL ENROLLMENT	3551	3730	3871	3981	4022	4138

ENROLLMENT GROWTH RATES

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
WINCHESTER						
BOYS/OPEN HOCKEY		-4.08%	3.59%	-8.20%	-16.49%	-4.94%
GIRLS HOCKEY		-10.00%	0.00%	-5.56%	30.88%	-30.34%
LTS		-6.22%	3.32%	-5.50%	-7.28%	-8.64%
TOTAL		-10.72%	-0.45%	-8.12%	-8.23%	-11.20%
USA HOCKEY		-1.17%	-3.82%	-0.46%	-0.71%	
WINCH. SCHOOL ENROLLMENT		5.04%	3.78%	2.84%	1.03%	2.88%

Winchester Youth Hockey

MASS HOCKEY PLAYDOWN APPLICATIONS

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
TOTAL TEAMS	851	876	893	870	803	0
Y/Y CHANGE	-1.28%	2.94%	1.94%	-2.58%	-7.70%	

MASS HOCKEY ENROLLMENT

	2006-07	2007-08	%CHG
21 TOWN TOTAL	7653	7139	-6.72%
UNCLAIMED*	895	2229	149.05%
TOTAL MASS.	44559	43691	-1.95%

Winchester Youth Hockey

WINCHESTER YOUTH SPORT COMPARISON ANNUAL ENROLLMENT

SPORT	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
HOCKEY	370	350	364	344	293	287
LTS	80	72	72	68	89	62
TOTAL	450	422	436	412	382	349
PARTICIPATION RATE	12.67%	11.31%	11.26%	10.35%	9.50%	8.43%
GIRLS SOCCER				697	658	631
BOYS SCOCGER				722	707	650
TOTAL				1419	1365	1281
PARTICIPATION RATE				35.64%	33.94%	30.96%
BASEBALL	759	793	849	904	906	906
SOFTBALL	250	229	301	298	274	306
TOTAL	1009	1022	1150	1202	1180	1212
PARTICIPATION RATE	28.41%	27.40%	29.71%	30.19%	29.34%	29.29%
GIRLS LACROSSE						
BOYS LACROSSE				200	225	240
TOTAL				200	225	240
PARTICIPATION RATE				5.02%	5.59%	5.80%
WIN SCHOOL	3551	3730	3871	3981	4022	4138

Winchester Youth Hockey

Research

Qualitative research is a critical element for understanding the overall environment and current perceptions, and for ensuring the voice of our constituents is heard and considered prior to developing any programmatic recommendations.

- Interviews with 12 youth hockey programs and the Winchester Soccer program:

Arlington	Lexington/Bedford	Winchester Soccer
Belmont	Melrose	
Billerica	Pentucket	
Braintree	Reading	
Burlington	Waltham	
Duxbury	Woburn	

- Four focus groups among parents of Learn to Skate, Mite, Squirt and Pee Wee/Bantam players. Groups included current players, those who have left the program and those who have left and returned.



Winchester Youth Hockey

Program Interviews – Summary of Key Findings

- Very few programs maintain they are strong and growing, nearly all towns are dealing with the impact of a changing hockey environment:
 - Too many programs options for the number of kids playing hockey causing erosion at the upper levels
 - Shrinking enrollments at the lower levels
- The issues of time and financial commitment are common from town to town
 - Cost containment is top of mind for all
 - Some see the current economic climate as beneficial to town programs
- Coaching, community outreach, consistency (practice time) are considered key elements for success
- Many have moved away from a one size fits all program to appeal to the varied interests and needs of their community
- Almost all are interested in open collaboration and exchange of ideas
 - Sense that we are all in this together and success is shared



Winchester Youth Hockey

Focus Groups – Summary of Key Findings

Sports are highly valued, and an integral part of family life

- *“Sports are essential as part of growing up – makes it easier to fit in, easier to go through life’s transitions.”*
- *“Sports help prepare you well for the future – you experience the successes and failures that are part of life. You develop core competencies that you will need all your life.”*
- *“It’s about commitment – fulfilling a commitment that you make to your team, having fun, being with friends – making new friends from all over town.”*
- *“You can develop life-long friendships through sports, it is an important part of belonging, being part of something.”*
- *“Sports are essential to healthy development - sound body & sound mind.”*



Winchester Youth Hockey

Focus Groups – Summary of Key Findings

Hockey is unique – the sense of community is unmatched in other sports

- *“There is an unparalleled sense of community with hockey – you make friends and connections that you’ll have for life.”*
- *“There is a great sense of camaraderie – both before and after the games. This is true for both parents and kids. You spend a lot of time together and you really bond.”*
- *“With baseball and soccer you don’t spend as much time (with your team) – you get dropped off, you play, you go home. Hockey is different.”*
- *There is simply nothing like playing with the friends you see day in and day out, that is something that only town hockey can offer.”*
- *“My son would always choose to come back to be with his friends. We really missed the camaraderie.”*



Winchester Youth Hockey

Focus Groups – Summary of Key Findings

However there are significant concerns about hockey...

- *“It’s too much pressure, too much of a time commitment – and if you are not willing to make that level of commitment, you get left behind.”*
- *“The season is just way too long – the time, the level of commitment – it cuts into family time and is just too much.”*
- *“It’s a lot of money if you are on the fence...cost (program fees and equipment) and time is definitely a barrier to entry.”*
- *“There is a perception of violence that surrounds the sport – and both the players and the parents involved.”*

...and about being part of Winchester Youth Hockey

- *“Being new to town, hockey was a great way to meet people in the community – but it is a little hard to break in, it is a little bit of a closed club.”*
- *“There is a sense of exclusion – you are part of the inner circle or you’re not – it’s pretty clear.”*



Winchester Youth Hockey

Focus Groups – Summary of Key Findings

Overall, it is not easy to learn about the hockey program

- *“Our neighbors played, they sort of brought us along. Don’t know how we would have heard about it otherwise.”*
- *“We had no clue about the program – we just researched skating ourselves...”*

And it doesn’t get easier once you are in the program

- *“You have to learn to navigate the system yourself. Rides, equipment the whole bit, it is a commitment unlike other sports and there is no built in network - they don’t make it easy for the family.”*
- *“We had a friend who held our hand and told us what we needed to do, where we needed to be. Otherwise we would have been lost.”*
- *“No one tells you what the program is about, what to expect. At the early stages you have no idea what’s next. What happens after learn to skate? What are my options?”*



Winchester Youth Hockey

Focus Groups – Summary of Key Findings

Lack of communication and transparency are pervasive issues

- *“The sense of the program caring about the kids, or taking an interest in the kids seems to have been lost – no one talks to you about how your kids are doing.”*
- *“There is no feedback mechanism, even when you ask about how your kids are doing there is a reluctance to engage. There is little to no open communication.”*
- *“The board seems so secretive – like everything happens in the backroom. There is a sense of “we know best”, you are expected to just trust and go along with whatever decisions are made.”*
- *“It feels like they do things simply because that is how it has always been done. It doesn’t feel like the kids come first.”*
- *“What does the organization value? I really don’t know.”*



Winchester Youth Hockey

Focus Groups – Summary of Key Findings

The tone for the program is set from the board - it is not positive

- *“They seem invisible, it feels like you rarely see or speak to the members.”*
- *“The officers of the board don’t show up at events, they don’t talk to you at the rink. They are the face of the program and are noticeably absent.”*
- *“It sends a negative message when the board members own children don’t participate in the program.”*
- *“It really doesn’t speak well for the program if they won’t even have their own kids play in it. If they are playing elsewhere, why shouldn’t we?”*



Winchester Youth Hockey

Focus Groups – Summary of Key Findings

Coaching effects attrition

- *“The coaching can be a lot better. It’s variable no matter where you go (town or elsewhere), but by and large it is better outside the town program.”*
- *“We wanted a different experience. My son had the same coach year after year after year – that wasn’t going to change. Sometimes you just need to shake it up a little. You learn from different people, different environments. The change has been positive.”*
- *“The coach sets the expectations for the team. It’s important. One year our team was losing a lot and the coach basically threw in the towel and decided the season was worthless. It was demoralizing for the kids and created a horrible dynamic which was not managed.”*
- *“Are coaches evaluated? Do they know what is expected of them? There is a real inconsistency from team to team.”*
- *“Could the more experienced coaches mentor those with less experience? Go on the bench with them – help them out.”*



Winchester Youth Hockey

Focus Groups – Summary of Key Findings

Communication around placements effects attrition

- *“Going on line to find your team is not a great experience. Other teams call you right away - it feels like they care more about your kid.”*
- *“There needs to be open honest communication around what the team will be like – by the time you find out where you placed, and who is on the team, it is too late.”*
- *“It matters who is on your team. You have to have kids you can play with. If you can’t skate with your teammates it’s not fun, and you look elsewhere. With so many people leaving, the teams just aren’t as competitive.”*
- *“You should know by the time placements come around where your kids stand. Why can’t there be communications all the way along? More objective feedback, some evaluation or report card.”*
- *“There has to be a more objective way to hold placements. Even if they are fair there is a perception of bias that colors people’s experience – why not just take it off the table?”*
- *“There is little to no movement year after year, the same kids make the A team. It never changes.”*



Winchester Youth Hockey

Focus Groups – Summary of Key Findings

The overall experience effects attrition

- *“It’s like they don’t see kids beyond the A level, you don’t get noticed. My son needed to feel like someone thought he had potential – it was a huge confidence boost just making another team.”*
- *“It was a domino effect – once one kid left they all started leaving. I had to find an alternative because all his friends had left.”*
- *“No one ever talked to me about staying – there didn’t seem to be any encouragement to stay –there was no communication at all.”*
- *“There should be more outreach to all families – make them feel part of something – some will be less likely to want to leave.”*
- *“Maybe one size can’t fit all. Maybe if there were more program options – more a la carte - more kids would stay. Some want something less intense, some want something far more competitive – more like a select program. Are there different ways to configure the offering?”*



Winchester Youth Hockey

Implications

Four key areas of focus/opportunity emerged:

- Manage the perceptions of the brand through increased **visibility** in the community **and engagement** with parents
- Consider **program options** for greater appeal to a broad constituency with varied needs
- Enhance the level of **coaching** and create greater consistency across the program
- Evaluate the management structure to insure **greater transparency**



Winchester Youth Hockey

Increase Visibility and Engagement

Increase **awareness** and **manage perceptions** of the hockey program through greater **community outreach** and consistent communications:

- Presence at Town Day
 - March in the parade
 - On the street booth with hockey “games”/coaches and kids on site/promotional and informational give-aways
- Articles in the Winchester Star
 - 1-2 articles per team per year/Article on year-end award winners
 - Op-ed’s to educate, promote positives
- Outreach at PTA meetings, Newcomer’s Club
- Increase WYH player involvement in the community
 - Raise money for local groups
 - Sponsor WYH community skating nights



Winchester Youth Hockey

Increase **awareness** and **manage perceptions** (cont'd)

- Increased engagement with Winchester High School Hockey
 - Mite's play in between periods of high school games (like the Bruins)
 - Greater partnership with the high school and middle school programs
- Leverage Win-Cam for local access programming
- WYH wear your team shirt to school day
- Player bring a friend to practice days
- Increase WYH presence at Flynn Rink (message board, advertising banners)
 - Move banners at Flynn Rink for greater visibility



Winchester Youth Hockey

Create opportunities for **greater engagement** and **enhance** the sense of **community** within the WYH hockey constituency (players and parents)

- New Parent Welcome Program
 - Welcome Kit (what to expect, what you need to know)
 - Equipment “swaps” for new families
 - Social events for parents
 - Monthly Family skate
- Encourage feedback and communications
 - Feedback mechanism on the web site
 - Mid-season team meetings for greater feedback
- Frequent pond-hockey like nights (at Flynn) for players and coaches/pond hockey tournament
- Booster Clubs to support teams that advance
- Host a tournament
- Annual “play a sister town” weekend
- Greater Merchandising
 - web store for merchandise



Winchester Youth Hockey

Program Option Considerations

- Move away from a one size fits all model to offer more program options
 - Intramural-like offering for less intense commitment (potentially in conjunction with other towns)
 - Opt-in/opt-out league commitment (a la the girls program)
 - In-house buzzer program running through Squirts
 - “Select” offering to compete head on with select programs
 - Shorter season (a la the Cheever program)
- Offer more options at the youngest levels
 - Floor hockey sessions
 - Skating with sticks
- Variety in practice schedules
 - One 90 minute practice per team every third week



Winchester Youth Hockey

Enhance Coaching

- Take a more systematic approach to managing coaching/coaches
 - Guidance around what to do and how to do it
 - Clear guidelines for what is expected, coaches scorecards for evaluation and support
 - Monthly coaching clinics to help with practice plans and drills (leverage high school coaching)
 - Create opportunities to have more experienced coaches (those who know hockey and those who have experience coaching) on the ice with less experienced coaches (at practices, on the bench)
 - Establish a mentor/buddy system for new and less experienced coaches



Winchester Youth Hockey

Enhance Coaching

- Hire guest coaches periodically to help coaches/fill in gaps to allow greater flexibility in scheduling and managing professional obligations
- Consider paying for permanent coaches (at pain point age groups)
- Do not have the same coach(es) and the same team move through the program together year after year
 - Provide kids the opportunity to learn from different people.



Winchester Youth Hockey

Management Structure for Greater Transparency

- Appoint a Communications Director to the board
- Create divisional board member ownership with oversight and general management responsibility for team operations and communications (with coaches, with the league, with parents)
 - One GM per division
- Re-evaluate placements process
 - Move up date of notification
 - Coaches call team members directly
 - Greater transparency in individual placement and team selection
 - Outreach to families who leave the program for other teams
- Increase board meeting engagement
 - “Require” team parent from each team to come to at least one board meeting per year
 - Invite coaches to attend meetings, invite discussion, create collaboration



Winchester Youth Hockey

Recommendations

- Create and sustain a thoughtful PR movement to get press for the organization and make people aware of “how to” join hockey so they “want to” join hockey. And, further cultivate the community of hockey playing children and their parents. Including:
 - Community events like town day etc.
 - Regular articles in the Star
 - Focus on developing the community of parents and players - welcome kit, pond hockey night, on-going regular communications
 - Mid season team meetings
 - Involvement with High School hockey program
- Develop different program options to offer greater program flexibility (shorter season, less practice and time commitment)
 - In-house buzzer program through Squirts
 - In house program for Pee Wee and Bantam
 - Opt-in team structure (like the Girl’s Valley League)



Winchester Youth Hockey

Recommendations

- Systematic approach to upgrade coaching
 - Clinics, education and mentoring
 - Do not have the same individual be the head coach for the same group of players season after season – allow kids to experience different coaches, different coaching styles as they “age” thru the program
 - Offer coaches schedule flexibility through guest coaching
 - Consider hiring coaches as needed/as appropriate
- Structural Board enhancements
 - Communications Director
 - Divisional Board Member Oversight
 - Regular Board attendance and participation from parents and coaches
- Placement process improvements
 - Move up notification date to within one week of placements
 - Coaches call their team members



Winchester Youth Hockey

Questions/Discussion



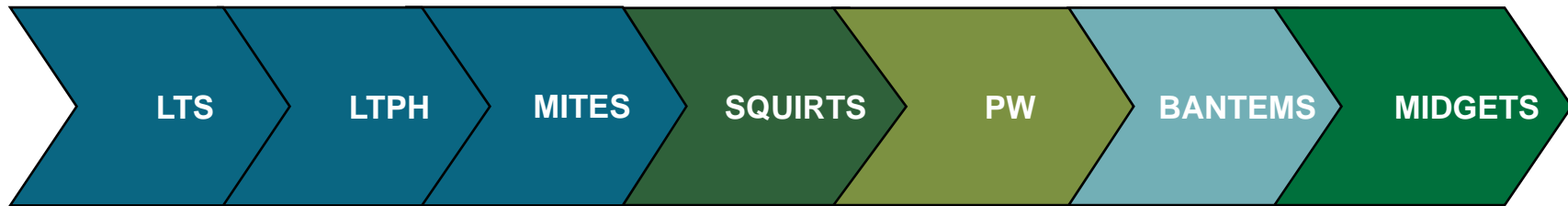
Winchester Youth Hockey

APPENDIX



Winchester Youth Hockey

Existing Marketing Plan



Growth

- Flyers are distributed to elementary schools (see attachment A)
- Ads are put in the Winchester Star with a focus on LTS and LTPH
- At their discretion, coaches may run articles on their team games
- Newsletter is sent to membership via e-mail
- Bi-annual fund raiser
- Annual scholarship (??)
- Annual banquet
- Cheever Program

Retention

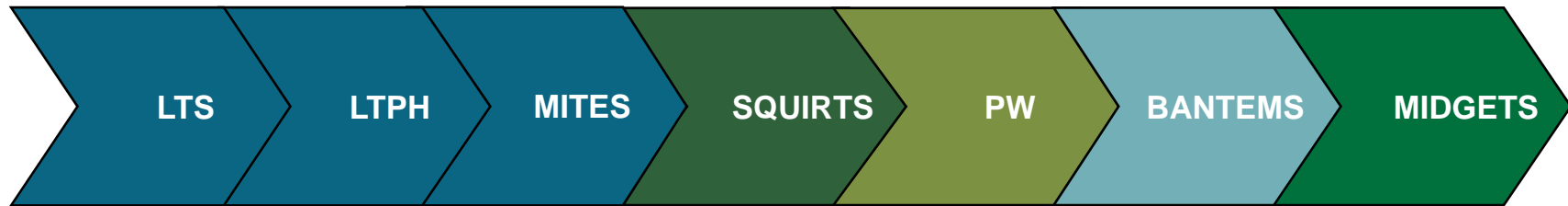
- No formal retention program exists at this time

Data sources: Tom Troiano, Denis O'Donnell



Winchester Youth Hockey

Past Marketing Plan



Growth

- Booth at Town Day
- March in Enka Day Parade
- Work the fields
- Board members went to LTS and LTPH and interacted with parents
- Communications were sent hard copy vs. e-mail (more personable?)
- Registration was often in person (more personable?)

Retention

- No formal retention program existed

Data sources: Tom Troiano, Denis O'Donnell, Ron Martinetti



Winchester Youth Hockey

Sample Scorecard

Winchester Youth Hockey Board LTS and LTPH

- **Growth**
 - Grow LTS by 10%
 - Grow LTPH by 25%
- **Retain**
 - LTS – 75% of Kids continue on LTPH
 - LTPH – 100% of players move to next level and return for next season

Individual Coach

- **Skill Development** 40%
- **Team Environment** 30%
 - Fun
 - Participation
- **Communication w/Parents** 10%
- **Retention / Recruitment** 20%
 - % of kids returning next year

