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Andersen leading supporters of Vikings baseball program

BY MARILYN THOMAS
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The Homewood-Flossmoor High School baseball season doesn't start until March 14, but the team's Vikings Baseball Boosters Club members are already revving up their support.

Eric Andersen of Flossmoor is the president leading the club, an organization dedicated to supporting players and coaches who are part of the Homewood-Flossmoor High School baseball program. Joining Andersen are Jim Lund, vice president; Laurie Anderson, treasurer; and Chris Steiner, secretary.

The boosters held a major fundraiser on Jan. 29.

"We can all agree that (H-F) is the premier school, and they give our kids everything they need from academics to athletics," Andersen told the audience at the fundraiser.

He got a round of applause for varsity coach John McCarthy for his work at improving the team the last four years, noting "our coaches value our players."

McCarthy said he is excited to have 75 players on the roster. He knows some schools are struggling to build teams, but he credited Homewood and Flossmoor recreational baseball programs and James

Hart School and Parker Junior High programs for keeping boys involved in the sport.

"Our program is strong. This community loves baseball," McCarthy said. "And what you (VBBC) allow us to do is provide our kids a better experience and that experience is awesome. Last year we went to our first ever sectional final."

The Vikings had a 19-8 record at the end of the regular season and won the regional championship title. The team beat Lincoln-Way East in the sectionals to advance to super-sectionals for a run up to a state championship title, but the team's attempt to go all the way ended with a 3-2 loss against Providence Catholic High School.

McCarthy thanked H-F Superintendent Von Mansfield and District 233 board member Steve Anderson for their support of improvements at the Vikings ball field. The school board agreed to a new under-drain system on the field, concrete curbing and new fencing, for installation of new infield synthetic turf, scoreboard and lights on the field.

Jim Patterson, H-F director of buildings and grounds, said the estimated \$1 million project is on time and on budget. Lights should be installed by March 15. Placing the turf will depend on the weather.

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Parks approves contract for architect for ice arena work

BY MARILYN THOMAS
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The Homewood-Flossmoor Park District hired Williams Architects of Itasca as the architecture firm that will design the new rink and equipment building at the H-F Ice Arena, 777 Kedzie Ave. in Flossmoor.

"The goal is to replace the mechanical system and get the ice arena up and running as quickly as possible," said Parks Executive Director Debbie Kopas. "The investment is large, and the district will likely sell bonds to fund most or all of the project."

At the park board's Feb. 15 meeting, Kopas said it isn't likely the rink will be ready for a September opening as was hoped.

Designs and technical work are moving forward to prepare bid documents. Kopas said she's been told supply chain issues could be a delay factor. She said one supply company said 26 weeks and another said 44 weeks for parts.

"Everyone at the table understands the urgency. Thanksgiving is hopeful," she said.

The board held a special session on Tuesday, Feb. 1, and accepted the Williams Architects contract on a sliding scale—8.9% fee if the work will be greater than \$4 million and 9.15% if the work comes in under \$4 million.

In addition, the board will pay \$74,750 for a specialty engineering firm to design the ice refrigeration system. That work will fall under the Williams Architects contract.

The park board shut down the ice arena in November after the current ice making system was found to be inoperable. Park commissioners were anticipating replacing the ice making system because it was outdated, but they had hoped for another year or two to plan the project.

Commissioners immediately began planning the repairs. In January, commissioners approved a pre-construction contract with W.B. Olson at \$19,775 and a construction management fee of 4%.

Decisions on other ice arena repairs, such as a new roof, will be considered once W.B. Olson presents the project's costs, Kopas said.