

**Blue Water Curling Club
Membership Update
September 29th, 2020**

It is almost October and the time that we would have been getting ready to throw our first rocks. The events of this monumental year have changed that. We closed early last March in response to the initial wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Blue Water Curling Club Board of Directors has been actively working since March to monitor conditions and applicable rules and regulations and to understand the potential restrictions on play for the 2020/21 season and determine what our curling season could look like. Our constant objective has been to ensure that we make a decision that protects the health of our membership and the financial resources of our club.

On September 24th, 2020, the Blue Water Curling Club's Board of Directors voted to have the curling club remain closed for the 2020/21 season.

The Board began our process in May by making a decision to push back the start of our curling season to November and extend into April '21 to keep the length of the season the same. In June we started to prepare and review financial scenarios to show the estimated cost of remaining closed. At that time, the board projected that most of our members would be returning for the season and financial scenarios were created to show our costs comparisons with a 70%, 80%, and 90% rate of returning members. We also took measures to take advantage of financial support available from the Federal and Provincial governments to assist our position.

In June, Curl Ontario, in association with Curling Canada released a '**Return to Play**' guideline, which is a road map for curling clubs to use to navigate the situation COVID-19 has presented. Amongst the many guidelines presented, the Return to Play document suggested that clubs were to look carefully at their financial situation to confirm that they can afford to operate under the new guidelines. The Return to Play Guideline also strongly recommended that each curling club survey their membership to gain insight and direction for making decisions about operations in 2020/21.

Through the month of July, members of the Board of Directors consulted various governing organizations, particularly the local health unit and the AGCO to understand the specific restrictions that would be imposed on social gatherings and recreational activities in our facility. These were used to develop a preliminary Operational Plan for our club.

The Blue Water Membership Survey was created and sent out to last year's membership in August. The purpose of this survey was to receive input from our membership that the Board could consider in making decisions for operations in 2020/21. We received an overwhelming reply to the Membership Survey with 81% of the membership taking time to submit their responses. The survey results provided good insight into the will of the membership. The responses of the survey also included many requests for more information on what the season could look like.

The responses to our key question “Are you planning on returning to curling for the 2020/21 season?” were as follows:

- 34.9% Definitely Yes
- 17.8% Definitely No
- 28.1% Undecided, Likely Yes
- 19.2% Undecided, Likely No

At our August meeting, the Board decided to prepare and present our “BWCC Return to Play Strategic Plan” document to the members. We felt that this would answer some of the questions asked by our membership. Of most concern to the board was the 47.3% of members who were undecided if they would curl this season. The Board therefore decided to follow up the “Return to Play” document with an online registration process. The Board asked the membership to register and pay for the curling season by September 20th – extended to September 22nd - with the provision that any registration fees collected would be fully refunded if we did not receive enough registrations by our Board Meeting date of September 24th to support a decision to open the club that is financially supported by the members. As of September 22nd, we received 81 registrations (online as well as a few phone in / email registration requests) which represent 45% of last year’s membership. Our projections showed that we would need 151 members to have the same financial loss as staying closed.

- Cost to the Club to remain closed **-\$17,000**
- Cost to the Club to open for 84% returning members (150) **-\$17,000**
- Cost to the Club to open for 45% returning members (181) **-\$46,000**

The Board therefore decided that the best interests of the BWCC are served by remaining closed for the 2020/21 season. In our survey, the last question asked was “If the curling club does not offer a 2020/21 season, will you return to and support the BWCC in the fall of 2021?” The membership responded with 80.5% saying yes, they would return. This endorsement provided guidance to the Board as we made our decision. One member commented on the survey *“As much as I would like to curl, the stability of the club is what concerns me the most. I would rather sacrifice one year of curling to ensure that we can remain financially viable.”* This view captures well the position the Board has taken

Other local area clubs are also engaged in the same decision-making process for their own clubs. The Board is keeping a close eye on the situation as there has been a suggestion that the BWCC may be able to operate as a central regional facility to host to curling in our area. This concept is very much in its infancy and will evolve as other clubs make their decisions. The Board remains open to considering this and any other opportunities that will benefit our interests and prove to be financially beneficial and/or sustainable but at this point for a shorter season. Click on the link below to put your name on the wait list should any curling opportunities present for the New Year.

To you our members, we wish you all a safe and healthy fall and winter season. We may not be together in the ice shed throwing rocks, but maybe we will see you out and about on snow shoes or at the ski slopes/trails.

All the best,

Anne Lemon

On behalf of the BWCC Board of Directors.