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# YMCA will no longer operate Whitney Ice Rink

By Casey Temple

Sports Editor

Citing staff problems, the YMCA of Sheridan will no longer operate the Whitney Community Ice Rink.

Whitney Foundation Board President Tom Kinnison said the rink — used for hockey, skating lessons and public skating among other things — would remain open.

“(The public is) not not going to see any difference at all. No difference whatsoever,” Kinnison said. “The board is totally committed to try and maximize the utilization of that facility. To have it open as many hours as we can so people can skate and do that in a manner

that really helps the community.”

Jay McGinnis, executive director of the YMCA, said staffing concerns caused the YMCA to decline the final year of a three-year contract to run the facility. Don Knievel, who managed the rink in the two seasons its been open, will retire in June.

Thomas Neibauer is also leaving the YMCA to go back to school.

McGinnis said while their two positions would be filled, finding someone with the knowledge of managing a rink would be hard to find.



Tom Kinnison

“Losing Don and Tom would have challenged us to go on with (managing) the ice,” McGinnis said. “In discussing it with Whitney, we just elected to decline exercising our option. We just didn’t know what our staffing would be, and out of fairness to them and for the program, not having the confidence we could replace someone that quickly we (decided not to manage the rink).”

Dave Withrow, a member of the Whitney Foundation, said the rink will be operated by a management group.

“What it will consist of, we’re not sure yet,” Withrow said. “We just found out (the YMCA wouldn’t manage the rink) two weeks ago.”

Kinnison added that he hoped to have the group formed “well before the end of the summer.”

“We have to know pretty soon, because we have to have a lot of things in place by the end of October,” Withrow said.

Sheridan on Skates has already said they would help manage the rink, Kinnison said. Other groups affiliated with the rink during the YMCA’s management have already contacted Whitney about maintaining their involvement, he added.

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## Rink

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“The Y has done a tremendous job down there, but we’ll move on,” Kinnison said. “The Whitney trustees see that (the rink) is used as a positive in this community and it has been.”

McGinnis’ said the rink’s success is a result of Whitney’s commitment to funding its operation and Knievel’s dedication. He said Knievel managed it in addition to his other YMCA responsibilities such as working with youth sports at the YMCA.

“The ice rink in two short seasons has become an exceptionally valued service in Sheridan,” McGinnis said. “One (reason) is Whitney’s willingness to fund it. It couldn’t be done otherwise.



Jay McGinnis

“Whitney’s commitment to the ice has made it happen,” he added. “And the people at ground zero — Don Knievel and his volunteers working it day in and day out.”

Kinnison agreed.

“Don has done a tremendous job down there,” he said. “I think the two years (the rink has been open) have gone great. We hope we have a good year next year and that more people can skate.”

Kinnison also stressed that it will continue to be “a community rink.”

“Whitney wants to make sure it’s open to everybody,” Kinnison said. “The purpose of Whitney is that all people of all economic interests are able to use (the rink). We

will not turn any child away because they can’t afford to skate.”