

Highland Pond ice skating could be very pricey

By **DAN DESROCHERS**
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GREENFIELD — Could the prospect of ice skating on Highland Pond be on thin ice?

The city is continuing to mull the possibility of bringing back city-maintained skating on the pond, which could provide a nostalgic experience and a location for outdoor hockey in the winter. However, it could come at a cost because the pond needs dredging, and city officials must determine what that cost could be and if it is affordable.

“We’re at the phase of determining all the challenges,” At-Large City Councilor Isaac Mass said.

These challenges were raised during a Community Relations and Education

Committee meeting Monday, where Mass said roughly two dozen residents had come to show their support for restoring Highland Pond ice skating, which was last available decades ago.

“It’s a cherished memory of people who grew up in Greenfield,” Mass said. “It’s one of the first places they explored.”

However, the pond needs dredging to be safe for ice skating, according to Recreation Director Christy Moore. And if the pond is to be dredged, there are questions of environmental permitting and impact.

“It is an environmentally sensitive area with fauna and habitat,” Moore said.

In addition, the estimated cost of such a project, including its permitting, isn’t yet



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Large, wet snowflakes fall on Highland Pond in Greenfield.

known, according to Mass. To determine that estimate, Mass said the City Council may have to OK a study.

The city does have previous estimates for related pro-

jects, and those rose significantly between 1999 and 2009.

According to Recreation Director Christy Moore, an estimated cost for dredging, construction and permitting

of such a project was \$350,000 in 1999.

Then, when Department of Public Works Engineer Larry Petrin provided an estimate in 2002, the total was up to \$440,000. And again in 2009, Petrin gave an updated estimate of \$580,000, according to Moore.

However, one hope is that the cost could be less since regular dredging of Leyden Glen is now scheduled to occur and, according to Mass, could make the equipment available for Highland Pond’s dredging.

And according to Moore, the city could receive grants for the project to reduce the cost.

“Some of the grants you have to have a match, some have varying percentages, some are federal, some are

state,” she said.

Moore also said that if the support from the public is large enough, then the project could happen, even if the process takes time.

“I know it’s a sensitive topic that everyone cares about. I think with time...it will move forward,” she said.

According to Mass, the Community Relations and Education Committee is expected to discuss potential environmental issues of the project in its meeting April 23. The city’s Conservation Agent Sarah Brodeur and Director of Planning and Development Eric Twarog have been invited.

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