

DON'T PENALIZE THIS HOCKEY PROGRAM

If the Legislature and governor ever consider the messages they send to their local government partners about the best way to do business, they'll realize they've just signaled that cities will be penalized for paying their own way sometimes.

The Issue
The Legislature has so far rejected a request for Civic Center expansion.

The Legislature has declined to include a proposal to expand the Mankato Alltel Center for women's college hockey and other programs, even though many similar venues around the state have been included and appear in line for money Mankato won't get.

There are a couple of problems with this. Minnesota State University men's hockey program is the only program in the WCHA that has to pay rent at its arena. Most, if not all, of the other teams play in arenas built and paid for by the state. Mankato, on the other hand, got money to build its Civic Center hockey arena from a local area sales tax approved by voters more than a decade ago.

The project was a city-university-community partnership that worked well. Now the Civic Center needs upgrades and MSU would like to accommodate its women's hockey team with a separate arena near the downtown Civic Center. Few find it an unreasonable request, but state budgets just get tighter and there appears to be little sympathy for how Mankato and MSU paid for their arena.

Budget questions certainly are legitimate with the state facing what could be a \$1 billion deficit. But then the Legislature should apply the same rules to other venues requesting bonding money. Funding requests for hockey rinks in Bemidji, St. Cloud, Crookston and Duluth — totaling \$82 million — were included in the bill; Mankato's request for \$1.5 million was left out. Mankato's request is in the Senate version of the bill, but that makes its prospects somewhat less likely in a compromise situation.

Rep. Kathy Brynaert, DFL-Mankato, said she was hoping to lobby to get the Mankato money into the bill.

Other factors, of course, are at work. Other arenas have sought the money for several years, and this is Mankato's initial pitch. Also, Mankato has already received approval of a \$24 million new MnDOT building and a \$52 million upgrade and addition of Trafton Science Center.

But the Legislature should remember a vote against Mankato funding will be like penalizing the city and university for doing things without state money. And there should be some consideration of the \$280,000 in rent MSU pays the Civic Center for renting the arena for men's hockey games. At one time, the university was reimbursed for that by the state, but that funding stream dried up a few years ago.

The MSU planning is as legitimate as the other arena requests. If the Legislature feels it has to keep to a tighter budget, it should do so equitably.

College hockey gameday



R.J. Linder

Kael Mouillierat

Minnesota State vs. Michigan Tech

The ninth-ranked Mavericks (17-13-4, 11-11-4) will close out the regular season the same way they started: with a WCHA series against the Huskies (12-17-5, 8-14-4). Tech swept MSU that weekend, winning 2-0 and 7-1. Minnesota State leads the all-time series 17-11-3 but has won just one of the last five meetings.

The 5-hole

Five things to know about this weekend's games:

1. Linder doubtful: Minnesota State senior defenseman and assistant captain R.J. Linder (1-7-8) is doubtful for this weekend's series due to a lower-body injury suffered last Saturday at Colorado College. Linder ranks second on the team behind sophomore forward Trevor Bruess (7-18-25) in plus-minus rating with a plus-13. Bruess is plus-19. Freshman Channing Boe (0-3-3) will take Linder's spot.

2. Finishing touch: MSU sophomore forward Kael Mouillierat (9-11-20) has found his scoring touch of late, netting five goals in his last five games, including Saturday's overtime goal over Colorado College, his third game-winning goal of the season. Mouillierat trails only teammates Mick Berge (17-5-22) and Jason Wiley (10-6-16) in goal scoring and is tied with Geoff Irwin (9-9-18).

3. Line 'em up: Coach Troy Jutting said that, with the exception of Linder, the Mavericks will go with the same lineup as they did against the Tigers. The fourth line scored the game-tying goal that night. Jerad Stewart (3-1-3) scored it, and sophomore center Ryan Gunderson collected his first point of the season and second of his career on the play. MSU is 9-3-2 when Gunderson is in the lineup.

4. Hot and cold: Including that October sweep of the Mavericks, Michigan Tech started the season 5-2-0. But it's had its share of slumps since. The Huskies are 2-8-2 on the road in WCHA play. Their 2-1 win over Denver Saturday not only snapped a four-game losing streak but put them back under consideration for the Pairwise rankings. Tech made it to the Final Five last season for the first time since 1996.

5. Scouting the Huskies: Michigan Tech continues to do it with defense, as they score a WCHA-low 2.03 goals per game. Junior goalie Michael-Lee Teslak (.926, 1.95) ranks fourth in the league in save percentage. He has shared time with fellow junior Rob Nolan (.895, 2.72). Senior forwards Peter Rouleau (12-14-26) and Tyler Shelast (13-9-22) lead the Huskies' offense.

This weekend's series

7:37 p.m. today
and 7:07 p.m.
Saturday, Alltel
Center
Radio: KTOE
1420 AM
TV: Charter
cable channel 29

— Shane Frederick