



## MEMORANDUM

TO: James H. Gailey, CMM, County Manager  
FROM: Mike LoConte, GM, Cross Insurance Arena  
DATE: July 25, 2023  
RE: Capital Improvement - Rink System Purchase

---

This memorandum is respectfully submitted to the Commissioners of Cumberland County in order to bid award the acquisition a new rink system for the Cross Insurance Arena.

The existing hockey dasher and glass system at the arena has remained unchanged since its original installation in 2003. Over time, the wear and tear from countless games and changeovers, to years of infrastructure damage and continuous repairs, the rink system and all of its components have become weakened and in need of replacement. This capital improvement will increase player and fan safety alike while creating substantial efficiencies that will save in overall operational costs.

The bid process was launched on June 20, 2023 when a public notice was circulated to facilitate the distribution of a detailed RFP. Of the five respondents who requested a full version of the bid, we received responses from two (2) qualified vendors, being:

- Athletica Sport Systems, and;
- All-American Arena Products

Both vendors accommodated our bid request for an on-site, mandatory interview and in-depth project management discussion during the period of June 28 – 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Both Athletica and All-American agreed to a site visit with the General Manager, Operations Director and two (2) Operations Managers during the aforementioned time frame.

Interview topics outlining bid requirements/goals:

- **Improve labor Efficiency:** The process of removing and installing the dasher boards needs to be significantly faster than traditional methods. This saves valuable time during rink setup and teardown, allowing for more efficient use of the facility and smoother transitions between events or practice sessions.
- **Versatility:** Quick change dasher systems are designed to be modular and easily adjustable, enabling rinks to customize the configuration of the boards based on various needs. This versatility is particularly beneficial for hosting different events, leagues, and as the rink can quickly adapt to specific requirements. Both vendors offer a quick-change solution for changeovers.



- **Cost-Effectiveness:** While the initial investment in a quick-change dasher system may be higher, the long-term cost-effectiveness can be substantial. The ease of replacement and maintenance means that the system is likely to have a longer lifespan, reducing ongoing repair and replacement expenses. We asked both vendors to put together the most cost savings quote but still addressing the need for overall efficiency improvement.
- **Enhance Player Protection:** A modern dasher and glass system are designed with player safety in mind. Upgraded materials and construction can help absorb impact better, reducing the risk of injuries during collisions with the boards or glass. We challenged both vendors to supply us with the most impact resistant glass and dashers to protect our pro hockey players further than the existing rink.
- **Increase Spectator Safety:** Cracked or weakened glass can be hazardous to spectators sitting close to the rink. Upgrading the glass system ensures that fans are protected from pucks, sticks, and other flying debris that could potentially enter the stands. We requested the quote include these materials to enhance the reduction in risk to our fans in the stands.
- **Visibility and Game Experience:** Older glass systems can become scratched, foggy, or discolored over time, obstructing the view for spectators. Replacing the glass with clear and high-quality materials improves the overall game experience for fans, allowing them to follow the action more easily. Both respondents were asked to quote us the best glass solutions that would improve these facets.
- **Compliance with industry standards:** Hockey organizations, leagues, and governing bodies often set specific safety standards for rinks. Replacing outdated dasher and glass systems ensures that the facility meets these standards and maintains its eligibility for hosting events and competitions. Both vendors assured the group that they are up to standard for a professional hockey experience.

We also confirmed the ability for both respondents to fabricate a custom-built system based on our unique floor plan and rink radius.

It was also determined that if any anchor points are stripped or not aligned with the new ice dam installation that both respondents will drill or reface stripped anchors as needed to ensure the base of the infrastructure is completely secured.

Both vendors have the ability to engineer a team player bench relocation ("bench flip") to the Spring Street side of the arena which allows direct access to training rooms, locker rooms and medical rooms; overall player and coach safety.



Interview results:

#### Player and Fan Safety - Advantage Athletica

- The boards manufactured by Athletica (Crystaplex 6A) allow for the shielding, boards and facing to flex upon impact which contributes to player safety, fan safety, less wear and tear on the system and ease of conversions. All American does not have these features.

#### Superior Quick Change Dasher System – Advantage Athletica

- Athletica's quick change dasher system, the process of removing and installing the dasher boards, is significantly faster than traditional methods. This saves valuable time during rink setup and teardown, allowing for more efficient use of the facility and smoother transitions between events or practice sessions. The ability to quickly adjust the rink layout ensures that the facility can accommodate diverse activities seamlessly.

#### Longevity and Maintenance – Advantage Athletica

- Our current dasher and glass systems requires frequent repairs and maintenance, leading to increased operational costs. Investing in a new, durable system can reduce ongoing maintenance expenses and extend the life of the equipment. Athletica is used in every NHL rink and is built to last longer than all the competition with superior fabrication and product quality.

#### Project Installation – Advantage Athletica

- Athletica can ensure an expedited installation window to a 2-week period or less (targeting July, 2024); has the ability to manufacture and overnight any components needed during any installation challenges as they own their manufacturing facility in Canada. It also allows for the Arena to book more events next summer than originally planned.

#### Reinforced Ice Dams – Advantage Athletica

- Aluminum reinforced dasher dams that are part of the quick-change system allows for forklifts and road cases to travel without creating damage to the frame. Athletica has a much better ice dam construction which will allow for easier/safer load ins utilizing fork lifts and road cases. The dams are built to withstand the heavy impact of show items traversing over the ice dam.

#### Event Booking Flexibility – Advantage Athletica

- Many times, the success of an event relies upon the arena's ability to change over from hockey to a concert or non-ice event. Having the ability to change over the arena quickly direct effects the ability to book additional shows. This feature also impacts revenues and profitability of the venue.



Both respondents submitted quotes to replace our entire dasher and glass system for the following base amounts:

Athletica – \$415,410 Base Price in US Dollars

All American – \$322,900 Base Price in US Dollars

Recommended award is **Athletica Sports Systems**.

Although the bid invoice is 28% more, Athletica significantly beat All-American in every category that we outlined during the bid process.

To recap, Athletica Sports Systems:

- Used in all NHL arenas - Athletica is the #1 preferred vendor for all rinks at the NHL level
- Advanced safety features for both players and fans - reduces liability risk
- Faster quick-change system - less expensive labor bills
- Superior ice dam construction to withstand concert installations - change over efficiency and safety
- Quality components requiring less repairs - longer life span
- Owns their own manufacturing plant in Canada - fast turnaround for components
- Allows for more flexibility booking shows - increases overall profitability for the venue
- Superior bid process - extremely professional sales and customer service team

Upgrading the dasher and glass system demonstrates the Arena's continued commitment to the sport and the safety of players and spectators. While the initial cost of Athletica's system is more than its competitors, the long-term benefits outweigh the expenses. It will result in a safer and more enjoyable hockey experience for fans and create more revenue-generating opportunities for the arena.

Additionally, a new rink will significantly benefit youth leagues by providing improved infrastructure, enhanced safety, and increased opportunities for development and community engagement. It creates a positive impact on the lives of young athletes and contributes to the growth of hockey in the region.

In closing, replacing our hockey dasher and glass system is essential to ensuring the safety of players and spectators, enhancing the overall game experience, complying with industry standards and maintaining a reputable and thriving hockey facility within our community.