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The Veteran's Memorial Rink is scheduled for a facelift by 2011

By **Auditi Guha**

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Somerville - Come 2011, Somerville could finally have its own ice hockey home base. After decades of clamoring about a rink that is old, worn out and in dire need of restoration, Somerville officials and residents are thrilled about new state funds and a plan for renovation.

Somerville parent Debby Higgins said her kids have been using it for 11 years and the work is long overdue. "It definitely gives the kids something to be proud of to have a home rink," she said. "For years we never had a home base and have traveled as far as Tyngsboro and New Hampshire to get some ice time."

The [Veteran's Memorial Rink](#) at Conway Park is scheduled for a million dollar face lift, which includes a new rink bed, new mats in the locker room and better management. The compressors have already been replaced and the old ones recycled said [Department of Conservation and Recreation](#) Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr.

State Rep. Denise Provost led the local delegation on the rink funding. She has long said that upgrading the rink has been a priority since she was elected.

Local and state officials showed up at the rink on Wednesday afternoon to highlight DCR's winter recreation opportunities. Sullivan said this is part of the governor's commitment of expanding programming, investing in recreation sites and strengthening partnerships statewide. "It's been a great investment and partnership," he said.

If all goes well, the rink could be completed and the management ropes could be handed over to the [City of Somerville](#) in 2011, much like the Dilboy Field project. Parents and local officials are thrilled.

[Mayor Joe Curtatone](#), who played on the rink as a boy, said he has fielded complaints from parents and coaches on the poor state of the rink since he became mayor and for as long as he can remember.

“It’s one of few open recreation spaces in the city that we have dire need of and we can do so much when we can run it all year round,” he said. “We’re looking forward to taking over and doing more with it.”

Thanks to a new state program, the rink was one of three in the state so far to receive a free Youth Hockey Clinic from [Boston Bruins](#) alumni.

Ken Hodge from the Bruins said this was something new they were trying, in partnership with DCR, to benefit kids statewide. “It’s great. It’s always nice to be able to give back to the kids,” he said. “What’s most important is that the kids are having fun.”

Winthrop resident Sam Deeks brought his three kids to Somerville for the hockey clinic on Wednesday. He said his wife was looking for things to do during vacation week and thought this would be a great way to spend the afternoon. “It’s really good they are doing this because hockey is expensive as it is,” he said. “It’s a nice rink and we would come here for youth events if we could.”

“It’s really very exciting and wonderful. This means a lot to people and especially the kids,” said Sen. Pat Jehlen. “It’s wonderful what you can do when everybody works together and collaborates.”

“It’s a great investment for the kids and clearly they are having fun,” said State Rep. Carl Sciortino. “Since the first day I was elected, the issue of the condition of the rink has come up