

# Ice rink a cool addition in Cape E

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By Sean Murphy

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CAPE ELIZABETH — The town of Cape Elizabeth now has a new wintertime outdoor recreation option, thanks to fundraising by local residents: a community ice rink.

Town Manager Matt Sturgis said the effort began in November 2020, when six local residents, led by Jay Brandeis and partners Sam Sezak and Chris Hooper, came to him with \$6,000 of their own money and a proposal to build a rink to donate to the town.

Sturgis said his reaction was, “Let’s find a way to do this. I was very enthusiastic.”

Two months later, Cape Community Ice Rink became a reality: a 150-by-75-foot ice patch, complete with sideboards and LED lighting, located behind Town Hall. The rink’s Facebook page, [facebook.com/CEIceRink](https://www.facebook.com/CEIceRink), announced the ice was ready for access on Jan. 13. It’s free and open to the public, but organizers of small groups, such as hockey teams, can book the ice as well, all through the page.

Brandeis said he and his fellow organizers grew up playing hockey, which led to the idea last fall. Since its opening to the public, Brandeis said he’s gotten plenty of positive feedback from visitors and skaters.

“Whenever the rink is open (weather dictates!), people are skating, which gives us great comfort that the resource we’ve created (with the help of many!) is valued by our town,” Brandeis wrote in an email.

The group has established a [GoFundMe page](#) to raise money to build an improved version with amenities such as refrigeration equipment so the rink will be available even on winter’s warmer days.

So far, the group has raised more than \$27,000 to build the current ice patch and fund the beginnings of an upgraded version of the rink. According to the GoFundMe page, in addition to a refrigerated ice sheet, the group wants to include hockey benches, a warming hut, roof and zamboni.



This ice rink in Cape Elizabeth was donated for public use by community members. *Courtesy Jay Brandeis*

“Our town has so much to offer those who love the outdoors — it truly is an amazing place to live,” the organizers wrote. “This pandemic has forced us to get as creative as possible outside, further magnifying something we believe many Cape residents have always wanted: a reliable, community-scale, outdoor ice-skating surface for ALL types of skaters (not just hockey!).”

Lauren Jacobs, a lecturer in outdoor leadership with the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Maine, agreed with the need to stay active during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Research has found consistent links between physical activity and mental and physical health,” Jacobs said. “Americans typically do not get the recommended amount of physical activity, and so anything that can help people get moving a little bit more each week can be a huge benefit to health and well-being. An outdoor ice rink would be a great way to help increase physical activity in a community, while also trying to be as safe as possible during the pandemic.”

Sturgis said a location for the upgraded version has not yet been determined, but he added the current ice patch, which now effectively belongs to the town, has been a welcome addition.

“This is a busy spot,” Sturgis said. “People are loving it.”

Sturgis agreed the town can always use more ways to get residents outside and active, especially during the winter.

“Just having another outside resource is great,” he said.

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