

Cedar Rapids arena now becomes ImOn Ice

Telecom business could pay \$1M over 10 years for naming rights

By B.A. Morelli, The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — ImOn Communications would pay the city of Cedar Rapids \$500,000 over five years, and potentially another \$575,000 over the five years after

that, for exclusive naming rights of the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena, under a deal announced Monday.

Under the agreement, the arena becomes ImOn Ice. The Cedar Rapids-based telecommunications company would have the right to name, advertise and promote the Ice Arena, which is home to the Cedar Rapids RoughRiders hockey club, along with public skating,

lessons, figure skating, youth and adult hockey, speed skating, private events and other activities.

"We sell to the citizens of Cedar Rapids, and so many of them come here," said Patrice Carroll, chief executive of ImOn. "It is so widely used and aligns with our customers."



Patrice Carroll
ImOn chief executive

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Arena/City Council expected to approve agreement

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She noted her company's investment is a differentiator and is an opportunity to give back to a community that has supported it.

ImOn would have the exclusive right as "official internet, phone and cable TV provider" of the Ice Arena, according to Cedar Rapids City Council documents. The arena sees about 200,000 patrons per year.

The Cedar Rapids City Council is expected to sign off on the deal during its regular meeting at noon today at City Hall, 101 First St. SE. The new ImOn Ice logo already is branded on the ice and doors of the arena.

Through the deal, which would be retroactive to Jan. 1, ImOn would pay the city an annual fee of \$100,000 per year for the first five years. ImOn would hold the option to extend the deal by



ImOn Ice is printed on the floor of the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena. The arena sees about 200,000 patrons per year. (B.A. Morelli/The Gazette)

The naming rights come on the heels of an extension with the RoughRiders through 2032 and a \$1.5 million, six-year plan to upgrade the facility with enhanced concession stands and party decks, and replacing seating in the hockey arena.

The 20-year-old Ice Arena has had financial issues.

"This was well built and well designed, but certainly through the years there have been maintenance challenges," Cedar Rapids City Manager Jeff Pomeranz said.

Cedar Rapids last year budgeted \$430,000 for the arena through hotel-motel tax revenue. This includes \$250,000 for equipment through the city's capital improvement budget, \$123,659 for operations and \$56,341 for operations losses.

Officials from the city and VenuWorks, a third party which manages the arena, have been seeking to reduce

costs and boost revenue. Last summer, the city invested \$35,000 to launch a new virtual reality arcade officials projected could generate \$50,000 to \$65,000 a year.

Naming rights for the city of Cedar Rapids-owned 6,000-seat U.S. Cellular Center were awarded in 2012 for \$3.8 million over 10 years.

Coralville's community development corporation last year signed a 10-year naming rights pact for Xteam Arena powered by Mediacom, a 6,000-seat arena in the Iowa River Landing District.

Taxpayers still haven't learned the financial details, despite the new arena being publicly funded at the state and local levels, because the agreement was between Mediacom and ArenaCo, the not-for-profit created by the city in 2018 to manage the arena.

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\$575,000 for years six through 10.

The money would go to op-

erations, according to Casey Drew, Cedar Rapids finance director.