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an increasingly sophisticated audience request, too tired to run cost-effectively and ironically, inaccessible to the physically challenged.

I grew up in Westport, went to Mahackeno, and swam on the Water Wrat Swim Team for seven years. I worry that the petty and increasingly emotional politics of this debate will force the closure of the Y. In a society where our 7- to 15-year-old youths can seemingly pursue a sport

'Petty and Emotional Politics'

I believe there is no doubt that the Westport Weston Family YMCA is a first-class institution dedicated to the betterment of our children and the community at large. It strives to offer first-rate programs that cater to the needs of pre-schoolers through its daycare programs; school-age children through its after-school sports and arts programs; and young and old alike through fitness and related cultural programs that encourage lifelong learning and values. For almost 15 years our Y has sought to find a better way to meet its obligation to the community in the face of a failing facility — too small to offer the kind of programs

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only if they are very good or great, the Y provides a less competitive and accepting environment. It is not about cuts or rejections, but personal best and citizenship. What a wonderful ideal that all children can learn from the discipline and teamwork of sports participation regardless of ability or disability.

Our town's leadership has politely and firmly decided that the future of the Y was not an issue it could or would take on. There are undoubtedly many good reasons (as we all hope) as to why the issue has been permitted to drag on from one year to the next. As a result the Y has been left with an increasingly diminished set of options as to where it can look to build a facility to meet the needs of this 21st-century community.

It is being presented by the opposition to the Y that there are other locations available. I know that as informed public servants you know better. Instead of not here but somewhere else, instead of endless speculating that the Y itself could invent access to town-owned land, and instead of claiming a sustainable Y could operate in multiple locations or at its downtown locale, I would like to hear a concrete plan — anything else is just misdirection. There is no other option. Given this fact, the Y has elected to build its new facility on just 7 acres of its own 32-acre property off of the Merritt Parkway at Mahackeno — a seemingly reasonable idea.

The Y has taken years of carefully planning and importantly listening to the community to get to this point. As an Old Hill resident I naively assumed what a perfect solution Mahackeno would be:

- Pre-existing camp owned by the Y itself (no-acquisition costs translates into continued reasonable membership fees preserving inclusion),
- Accessible by major roadways (easy to get to versus the congestion on the Post Road),
- Preserving of open space (no more mega-mansions),
- Building of community (a safe place for my kids to play outdoors,

closer to home than Compo).

Faced with impending bankruptcy from a flat membership base (as a nonprofit the fees charged are designed to promote inclusion not revenue maximization) and spiraling costs due to a building that is increasingly failing, the Y has moved to sensitively plan its relocation and will continue to be the model citizen of our community. In coming before you, the Y has been held to the highest standard in terms of conformance to our town's environmental, safety and now zoning requirements. I am confident that you will give the Y every consideration so that this cherished resource of generations past can continue to serve future generations. Please do not take lightly the unique mission of this organization that lets a kid be a kid.

I implore you not to let the Y go. It is obvious that the Y is not just a health club or a commercial enterprise, but embodies the very soul of our community. The value of our community will be diminished; the promise to our children and grandchildren will be broken, if we lose an institution that has meant so much for us all for almost a century. The Y's application demonstrates its commitment to fit in and be a great neighbor in its new location.

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