

Changes his mind

The following letter was written to Ron Corwin, chairman of the Westport Planning and Zoning Commission:

I read in the local newspapers last week that Y Downtown gave you a petition, which opposes the Westport Weston Family Y's proposed new facility at Camp Mahackeno. I signed that petition in 2005, when I thought there was still a chance that the Family Y might build a new home on town-owned land.

Like many in Westport, I once preferred that the Westport Weston Family Y move to Baron's South. But that is no longer possible given that the town built the Senior Center in the middle of the property.

Since I signed the Y Downtown petition three years ago, I have learned that no downtown land will ever be available to the Family Y.

First Selectman Gordon Joseloff has said that he will never give or sell land to the Family Y. (Given that the Y Downtown petition is more than three years old, I suspect it lists many people who have changed their minds on the Mahackeno issue).

The town's reluctance to enter into a public-private partnership with the Family Y forced it to seek another solution. After years of looking for a suitable location, the Y leadership decided to build at Mahackeno on land that the Y has owned since World War II. This proposed new facility — which is now before your commission — will use only six of the campsite's 32 acres. The vast majority of the camp will remain open space, with improved access for year-round recreational activities. Contrary to what some people say about the proposed septic system, the Family Y facility will not endanger the neighborhood. In fact, it will have a minimal impact on the environment, including Lee's Pond, Poplar Plains Brook, the Saugatuck River and Long Island Sound. The septic system will be in strict compliance with all DEP codes and regulations. It will not discharge directly into the river, as is the case with

the town's wastewater treatment facility.

As a former employee of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, I am annoyed by Y Downtown's frequent criticism of the DEP. Connecticut has some of the strongest environmental protection laws in the country and the DEP is staffed with talented, diligent, and well-educated professionals. If Connecticut DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy says that the Family Y project will not adversely affect our local environment, I believe her.

I also believe that people should be allowed to use their land as they wish as long as that use conforms to local and state regulations. I am appalled that Y Downtown continues to thwart the Westport Weston Family Y from building a new facility, which seems designed to conform to all of our planning, zoning and environmental regulations.

I no longer believe that it is feasible, or desirable, to keep the Westport Weston Family Y in downtown Westport. In fact, I proudly display two "Make Mahackeno Happen" signs at each end of my front yard. That is why I recant my signature on the Y Downtown petition and I respectfully request that you redact my name from line 765 of the official copy.

*Jose S. Villaluz III
Westport*

~~Food, glorious food~~

~~On behalf of the Westport Woman's Club, we would like to thank the National Association of Letter Carriers, in conjunction with the United States Postal Service in Westport, for their time and effort in executing their annual "Stamp Out Hunger" Food Drive on Saturday, May 10. We were the appreciative recipients of an enormous amount of non-perishable food items that were graciously delivered by them to our clubhouse.~~

~~Mail trucks after mail truck, filled with donations, arrived~~