

# End Game?

Soon, we think, except for the legal battles, the Mahackeno controversy will be behind us and many people in town will heave a sigh of relief. The contentious issue has dominated the psychic landscape of Westport for a long time.

One side describes the proposed Y facility as "monstrous" and the Family Y as if it was some sort of evil empire. The other side says the Family Y is as much a part of the community as mom and apple pie.

It's not likely the two "sides" will be chatting at the first barbecues of the season.

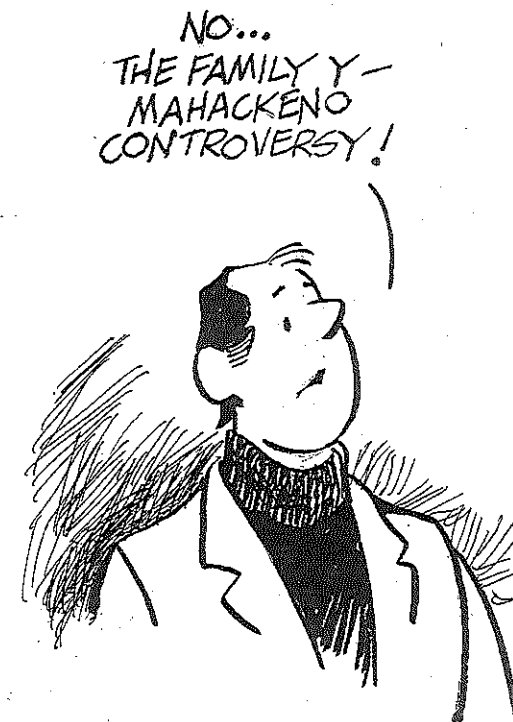
Oddly, many people seem to be missing one of the central points of the discussion. The Town of Westport told the Family Y there will be no deal involving town-owned land. The Y got nowhere with the town so it went in another direction. After more than a decade of looking, the Family Y decided it had no choice but to use its own land at Mahackeno to build a new facility.

If you think the Y should be built downtown, on town-owned land, than you should be voicing your opinion to Town Hall. It's not the Family Y's fault that no offer has been forthcoming.

Even if the Town of Westport does change its mind at some point, it's likely other people will start complaining about giving the Family Y town-owned land just as they did when the idea first surfaced years ago in relation to the Baron's South property.

Land swaps have also been suggested but, again, the town doesn't really seem interested.

The Family Y has been forced down this path and it's spent more than a decade and a substantial amount of money to arrive at its present proposal. Asking the Family Y to drop its plans in mid-application with-



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out a real alternative of any kind is preposterous.

We believe the Family Y is entitled to due process, just as any other property owner in town would be.

We also believe the state and local entities whose job it is to deal with these types of applications on a regular basis should be allowed to do their job; make impartial, objective decisions based on the merits of a particular case.

We are hoping something good will emerge from this controversy.

We hope to see a vigorous election this fall with a high voter turnout and many candidates for all of the seats being contested. During the campaigns we hope to see a discussion of some of the issues brought into relief by the Mahackeno con-

troversy (the blue line, the rights of property owners, the use and control of town-owned land, representation vs. advocacy, etc.) because they warrant discussion in a larger context.

We also believe Westport should have the flexibility to call referendums on issues of great importance. A referendum on the Family Y would have been informative to say the least.

It took only two RTMers or 20 electors (registered voters) to bring Y approvals before the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) but no number of people, no matter how large, could have forced a town-wide referendum on the subject. That doesn't seem logical.

In the end, if a new Y is never built on town-owned land, it won't be the Family

Y's fault.

And, if Westport is left without a Y because Planning and Zoning (P&Z) doesn't allow it to build a new facility on its own property at Mahackeno, well, the Family Y won't shoulder the responsibility for that either.

Residents had more than a decade to become part of a Y solution but left the Family Y to its own devices.

It will be interesting to see what happens if the P&Z denies the Family Y's application. Will the "anti-Mahackeno" people who say they are really "pro-Y" lobby the Town of Westport to help create a new "Downtown Y" with the same intensity that they worked against a Mahackeno Y? Or, will they consider their work done and their mission accomplished?