

~~Editor's Note: The editorial was not intended to characterize the views of any particular individual.~~

The Continued Existence of a Y In Westport

I find myself writing to you to explain my feelings about the Y and its key role in my happiness in Westport. In short, I am a 3-year resident of Westport, having moved from

continued on next page

continued from previous page

New York City with my wife and two children (ages 5.5 and 3; truth be told, my wife carried child no. 2 here in her belly). We live on Wheeler Gate, about a half mile from the Y's current location, and we have truly enjoyed easy access to the Y.

That said, my purpose for writing is less to express a strong opinion for where a new Y would be located, but more to make sure you realize how important it is to folks like me that one *does* exist somewhere in Westport. The number of activities and benefits are countless, especially for young families like mine that moved to the suburbs to enjoy the space and recreation that is often way too stressful and overcrowded in the cities.

I recognize the tension that has been building amongst those in the town on both sides of the argument, but I am also enough of a realist to know that people can get rather passionate about things affecting their home-life.

At the end of the day, however, I want to make sure my voice is heard loudly and clearly amidst all the arguing: *Westport needs a Y*. We are an affluent community and shouldn't have to rely on other towns to support our recreational and community activities. Perhaps the most frequent thing I hear about why Westport is great is the sense of community in having a town beach and Longshore facilities. The irony is not lost on me as to the argument that took place 20-plus years ago about whether to build Compo Beach playground or not. I have not met a single person so far that regrets the fact that it exists, and on the contrary, it is a huge selling point in recruiting new homebuyers to the town.

So, in summary, I too am passionate about the Y. We have a family membership, I play basketball every Saturday morning with a group of 15-20 other dads, both kids take swimming lessons, my wife takes aerobic classes and pilates, we send our kids to Half-a-Days in the summer and once they get older perhaps to summer camp, and I expect our involvement to only grow as we learn about other programs/activities offered.

I grew up in Wayne, N.J., and witnessed the construction of a new Y there in the late 1970s and saw how valuable it has been to that community. It is not a coincidence that I was back there last month as my parents, who still live in Wayne, took my children to see The Max & Ruby Show in the Y's performance theater. In short, the Y makes Westport a better place and must be preserved at all costs.

So, where do I stand on the current issue of Mahackeno vs. downtown? While it may be hard to file me in a category, let me try to make it simpler. If it is Mahackeno or no Y at all, I vote for Mahackeno. If there is a real chance of a downtown Y, that would be my ultimate preference, but only because I live so close. But clearly, not at the risk of having no Y at all. If at the end of all of the discussion we find ourselves without a Y, I will find it more than a shame, as I believe the role of our

town officials is to understand the needs and wants of its taxpayers and move to meet them, whether the issues are complex or simple. I fully recognize how complex this issue is, which is why I am focusing more on making sure we have a Y rather than dictating terms of where it has to be located. I think that if you get past all of the emotions that have been on display you will find most people also feel this way.

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