

Letters to the Editor

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downtown but the Y's own survey which was made public showed the same result.

Contrary to what Mr. Dickinson has said in regard to the Y boards ignoring the surveys, the Y worked diligently for over 10 years to place a Y downtown. Essentially none of the people in the Y Downtown group gave any support to this effort. For the most part the only reaction was a negative one from people living in the area of Winslow Park and Baron's South.

The Y looked at rehabilitating its existing building for well over \$20 million. This proved impossible because of the need to shut the building down for about two years tossing out its valuable staff and

members while the work was being done.

So the Y boards determined that they needed some other land downtown. They looked at the Imperial Parking lot but it was too small and highly contaminated. At the same time the Planning and Zoning Commission stated they did not look favorably on a public/private partnership.

The Y attempted to work with First Selectwoman Farrell to buy space on either Winslow Park or Baron's South. She was unwilling to consider either location. Similarly, First Selectman Joseloff has clearly stated there is no room for a Y on either property. In order to obtain a change of use of town property, the first selectman has to

apply to the P&Z with an 8-24 and this has to be approved by the P&Z. Neither of the first selectmen has been willing to support a Y on downtown property owned by the town in spite of the fact that a majority of the people in the town have preferred that location. After many years of trying to find a downtown location, the Y realized that its own Camp Mahackeno would serve the public in the best possible manner.

Under the circumstances it is difficult for me to see how a referendum would have served to ameliorate the controversy in regard to the location of the new Y building. The Y boards have been working on the search for well over 10 years. They are quite aware of

public opinion and have done their best to do what is best for their members and the public in the town.

**PETE WOLGAST, CHAIRMAN
Y BOARD OF TRUSTEES
WESTPORT**

Editor's Note: Both sides of the Mahackeno controversy say they represent the majority of Westport. We'd like to know which claim is more accurate. A properly worded referendum could also have told us what percentage of the town favors Winslow Park, Baron's South, Imperial Avenue, Mahackeno, etc. And, perhaps more importantly, considering the lack of options, what percentage would accept a Mahackeno Y over no Y at all.

Your editorial on April 30 suggests a change in the Town of Westport Charter to allow non-binding referendums meant to solely assess the opinion of people. You suggest that if we had had such a referendum last November we would know how people feel about the location for a new Y and this would have eliminated some of the controversy.

Just below your editorial a letter to the editor from Roy Dickinson supports a town-wide referendum. He mentions that an independent survey showed overwhelming support for a downtown Y. He goes on to say that "Unfortunately, the outcome of the survey was ignored by both the town administrators and the Y board, so we are faced with all this acrimony today."

We do not need a referendum to tell us where people in Westport have wanted to place a new Y. Not only did the independent survey to which Mr. Dickinson refers clearly show the vast majority wanted a Y

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