

## **E-Mail Debate on the PARD/YMCA Joint Venture**

*Compiled verbatim by Keith Huntsman*

Updated 09/27/2009:

From: **Joan DeLuca**  
Sent: Thu 9/24/09 9:47 PM

[Who] is Andrea Smith and to whom was her e-mail addressed? I'm always skeptical of excerpts from anything; for example, the words "our" and "their" could be used to indicate the city and the Y, the Y and the neighborhood, etc.. I'm not particularly in favor of the Y operating the recreation center; like you, I think it should be a city effort, even if it means that the center would not be as "complete" as we might like it to be. I am a member of the Y and I think their facilities are acceptable. I have seen young children there, since they do provide child care.

I am equally skeptical of statements about "seeking grants" to operate some aspects of the recreation center. Grant writing is not easy; foundations and corporations are very specific about what they will fund and about the fiscal controls and reports that are necessary. Many provide "seed" money, but very little ongoing support. Others require matching funds from other sources and/or a guarantee that the program will be continued after the grant money is exhausted. For example, donating a few computers is very different from granting money to operate a computer literacy program. Many non-profit organizations employ an individual whose sole responsibility is writing grants. Believe me, it's not a "little work," especially when done by volunteers with other jobs and responsibilities.

In short, I would prefer that the rec center be entirely a city project, but if a partnership with the Y is the only way the city will fund it, then so be it. I don't want to cut off our noses to spite our faces....

Joan DeLuca  
Neighborhood resident since 1972

From: **Kristin Harrison**  
Sent: Thu 9/24/09 4:20 PM

Though, I'm out of town, I just wanted everyone to know that I whole heartedly agree with Martha. Put the brakes on "talks" with YMCA. The city of Austin owes the people of North Austin a proper, secular, civic center.

It is unacceptable to allow a COMPANY than CAN abandon our community to jump in and take the funding we worked for, just because the city is having a temporary budget crisis.

Please folks, we deserve better.

Kristin

From: **Dempsey, Martha F**

Sent: Thu 9/24/09 2:56 PM

Good Afternoon All:

I know that the decision will probably be that YMCA takes over the center and to me that is very unfortunate. If you read what Andrea Smith is saying, she is practically declaring that they are taking over and that this is **their** facility. Why do we have to pay membership to belong to our own center? Well, it will not be our own center. As for all the references to the children, what pray tell did they do or doing for our children? As for use of computers, we just don't need computer usage we need computer literacy, training and instructional enhancement programs so that our children and adults can catch up with the rest of the world. I was hoping that NACA would stand firm and allow us to formulate a grant seeking committee to find funding for various programs that we are desire. If the city of Austin really wanted additional funding so that we can build an upscale facility and have enough money to efficiently operate it, then they would allow us to put together a partnership plan involving not just YMCA but a host of other sponsors. If YMCA is looking for a facility where they can run a few programs, then they can either lease spaces or provide funds as one of the co-sponsors with a provision that they can use the facility. The duration and "use" of the facility by sponsors should be limited and based on the level of funding they provide.

Look at all the other facilities in San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, Round Rock, etc. They all had sponsors like HEB, ABC Pest Control, Pepsi, IBM, Dell, Walmart, Sysco, Temple-Inland, BP to name only a few of thousands. I have a 17 page listing of potential Texas sponsors and a database of national sponsors who fund on local levels that we can solicit sponsorship from. It will take a little work but it can be done. Once you get one sponsor on board, it is very easy to get others. That is what these organizations look for in giving back to communities and believe you me, NACA is ideal.

One sponsor that I know would probably be on board is the company that I was able to obtain 10 computers [excellent condition], chairs and a printer as a donation to NACA. Five of these computers I was told went to the library. Now if I was able to do this as proof that we can get donation/sponsorships then what is the hesitation?

I can't seem to get my point across and it is so dishearten after all the work we did. There a few of the NACA members who have expressed that they do not want the "exclusive" partnership with YMCA but will it be enough to get a No vote. I would rather see a consensus from NACA so that it will leave no doubt to the city that we know what we want and what we expect for them to provide. They just can't shovel something down our throats and say well if you don't agree then all we can do is give you the bare minimum. We pay taxes and we vote for people to represent us and ensure our rights to be given the same level of service as the other communities.

If any of you would like to leave a legacy for your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc with a very powerful message that a community that work hard and pursue what it needs for the betterment of its residents then here is the golden opportunity to give them a community center that would forever stand as a reminder of a community working hard and achieving. The North Austin Community Center [or whatever the name will be] period.

As always, thanks for listening!  
martha

From: Andrea Ray Smith <arsmith@austinyymca.org>

Subject: Answers to your questions

To: smilam1211@earthlink.net

Cc: elangsdoo@yahoo.com

Date: Wednesday, September 23, 2009, 3:22 PM

**NACA Follow-Up Questions – Part II**

**Will there be a way to have truly free access to computers (with a sign-up or registration process) for people/children who are not members of the Y?**

Yes, we do believe there will be a way to provide free access to computers, and we're eager to sit down with all interested parties to develop the best plan.

We can envision times of the day when the community will be welcome to come in and use computers at no cost. We also know from experience that it's not always advantageous to enable free access to everyone at the same time. For example, there may be times of the day when older adults will want access to computers without having to share them with children.

One thing that we will hold firmly on is our need to monitor access to our facility to ensure safety and appropriate behavior, especially given our role in caring for children.

Finally, we encourage memberships because they better enable us to build relationships with our members and – especially when it comes to children – we believe that having a responsible adult who cares about kids and works to instill character development values in them is a more effective approach than a drop-in program.

**What percentage fall into the “Under \$25,000” annual income range?**

As of Sept. 23, 2009, seventy-seven percent (556 of 718 membership units) fall into the “Under \$25,000” annual income category.

Furthermore, our Membership For All rate scale does not reflect additional financial aid discounts that are provided for members with extenuating circumstances.

As a result, as stated in our Financial Assistance Policy, no one is turned away from the YMCA of Austin due to an inability to pay.

Andrea Ray Smith  
Branch Executive  
North Park YMCA  
arsmith@austinyymca.org  
(512) 973-9622

*Initial debate, published August 8, 2009*

Date: Friday, June 26, 2009,  
From: Dempsey, Martha F  
Subject: RE: Meeting on North Austin Rec Center WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24th - Gus Garcia on Rundberg at 6:30 pm

Good Evening All:

First, I want to give you an update on our meeting with PARD, then I want to express my thoughts on how I feel about the new information.

Wednesday night we met with the Dream team (as I have come to name them) from PARD and were presented with a proposal. It seems that the YMCA (non-profit conglomerate) approached the City of Austin regarding

forming a partnership in regards to our community center. They are proposing that YMCA would provide funding for a larger facility to be built on the site. In turn, they want to be the ones to operate the community center under their operating standards and specifications. The City of Austin would be relieved of having to build the center and providing operational funding (a savings of \$500,000).

The task force is requesting a meeting with YMCA for our next NACA meeting set for August 20<sup>th</sup> so that they can present to us directly what type of offers they are proposing in terms of what the community wants and to answer our specific questions. This gives all of us [whether you are on the task force, NACA board member, a NACA member or just someone who reside or strive for the betterment of the NACA community] the opportunity to research YMCA's operations, contact members of the community, speak with our community leaders and inform them of this very important development. We are asking that you VOICE your opinion on whether you approve of such a partnership or whether you want to keep the City of Austin as management of our community center.

Some members of PARD visited one of the 12 sites in Dallas-Fort Worth, in which the city partnered with YMCA. At the meeting, PARD staff was able to answer some of our questions but they stated that in some instances YMCA staff was a little evasive in answering some questions [if I understood correctly.]

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TO: [NACA Members}

FROM: Martha Dempsey

07/03/2009

Thanks to those of you who chose to send me back some comments. The reason for the initial email update was to make you immediately aware of the new development and not waiting to spring this on you at the August 20<sup>th</sup> NACA meeting. PARD staff expressed that any delay in making a decision would affect their timeline. Of course, if the decision is to go with YMCA delaying the timeline for PARD would be irrelevant.

My question to NACA board and to the task force: ***What are the plans for informing the community so that this is not just confined to a small group of 20 – 25 people when we have thousands living in this area?*** We have a little over 6 weeks before the meeting to do this.

Anyone receiving this email is being asked to please contact others that I don't have an email address for and ask them to send me their take on this. I will keep updating this table with any response that I receive and send out periodically so that I am not cluttering your mailboxes.

Thanks again!

Martha

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873-6168

Responders	Responses and Comments	
Angela & Bob Baker  Sat 6/27/2009	We are absolutely opposed to the YMCA taking over this site.  We have an agreement with the city as part of the bond package to build and staff our community center.	

8:16 PM		
Inez Rice Sat 6/27/2009 11:53 AM	I do not think we should allow the ymca to have any part in this. this should be between the city & naca . I am a member of naca .	
Kristin Harrison Sat 6/27/2009 7:28 AM	I can not go on the trip to Fort Worth because I'm out of state, but this to me is unacceptable. I agree with Martha whole heartedly. The city can not pawn off their responsibility to the YMCA. We were made promises and those should be kept. Again, Martha is right in that the YMCA was nowhere to be found for Katrina refugees, and has 0 outreach into our community. That center over there on Lamar is a dump. Further, the YMCA is a religious organization fundamentally. We are a diverse community religiously and ethnically, and we deserve a secular place to gather as a group.	
Linda Moore Fri 6/26/2009 7:39 PM	Martha,  I don't think it is appropriate to ask for a response from anyone before the presentation has been made, so my suggestion is to take a vote at the August 20 meeting.	
Charlotte Jackson Fri 6/26/2009 6:44 PM	Martha, thank you for the community center update. I will pass this information on to the Park at Quail Creek board of directors and encourage them to step up to the plate and be proactive in the development of this important community project. And most importantly to me, keep it in NACA's control.	
Evelyn Monnich Fri 6/26/2009 6:40 PM	Thanks Martha for sending this information to all of the above. I tried to talk about it at "coffee" this morning and most of the people did not think too much of the idea but we didn't get to discuss it very much since a Code enforcement officer was also there. No one can explain it better than you. I am interesting in going to Benbrook with all of you. Evelyn	Trip to Benbrook
Martha Dempsey Fri 6/26/2009 4:14 PM	My Thoughts on this:  1. YMCA may be willing to accommodate us by providing programs to meet some of needs but the same way that YMCA obtain their funds to build larger facilities, offer more programs, etc is the same way that any organization can obtain funds. We need to put together a grant writing team and it doesn't have to just be people from NACA. There is funding for 501(c) 4 - Civic leagues, community organizations, and other social welfare organizations, which I understand that is what we are unless the NACA board did move forward with seeking a 501 (c) 3 status which would really open funding sources.  2. In the 14 years I have lived here I have never seen the YMCA proactive in the community in trying to outreach to our youth and I certainly don't see any outreach for activities that benefit the community.  3. The City of Austin owes us a community center. We did everything they have	I say Thanks, but NO THANKS YMCA!  Trip to Benbrook

asked us to do and we have gone overboard to make sure this center happens. Saving the city money by not having the city operate the center is not a trade off. Any monies they spend on the center go back to the city anyway. There were some concerns about city paid staffing. Again, the city budget is not our problem but if I were asked what could be done to staff the center. Check the staff already on the payroll. Shift some of them to the new community center. Then open up a volunteer registry for people willing to donate time to help the few staff with programs that are not self-supported. There are athletes [with charities of their own] who look for chances to work with young children interested in sports. There are major high-tech companies (like the one who donated the computers, chairs and printer) who have requirements that their employees do volunteer work in the community. These folks are software developers, programmers, tester, engineers, etc. Not only do they do computer work [which would be wonderful if we can get them to sponsor our computer lab], but they also TEACH math, science, and anything about computers technology. Of course, the city should require background checks or some sort signed agreement with the volunteers to ensure that the follow city policy in serving the public.

4. NACA residents pay TAXES so it is not like the city comes up with all this money.
5. Community Tax Center for our community. It doesn't have to be for free, perhaps on a sliding scale or we can serve as a VITA or TLC site funded by IRS grant funding if we partner with IRS. This opens another funding source.

....And something very important to me when I decide to deal with a company, an organization or even a person. I look for "HUMANITY" so my #6 is

WHERE was YMCA when the HURRICANES (Katrina, Ike, Rita, Gustav) displaced all those people? Not ONE of the 8 AUSTIN YMCA offered assistance or outreached to help people get back home. [Note: The community center can serve as a disaster site. If not equipped for lodging folks, it can help provide services, food, supplies, etc. The state and federal government reimburse for assistance with disasters.]

Keith  
Huntsman  
  
Fri 7/3/2009  
10:18 AM

I agree that this is a VERY bad idea. To put our community center into the hands of a non-secular national non-profit is asking for shortages in the future. Don't think the City won't thin our budget because of the affiliation, and there is no guarantee that the Y will be able to make up the difference. Also, the Y makes a lot of its funding by selling memberships to its facilities. That's an exclusion of the very people we want to attract, those kids and families who can't afford other places to gather and have constructive fun. Finally, there's the matter of responsibility: a lot of activities may be curtailed or be made prohibitive by the Y's notoriously stringent liability waivers:  
[http://www.ymcaofcentraltexas.org/Portals/0/docs/Liability%20Waiver%20Form%20This is typical.](http://www.ymcaofcentraltexas.org/Portals/0/docs/Liability%20Waiver%20Form%20This%20is%20typical.pdf)

Granted, my view is exclusive of any proposed agreement between the City and the Y, but I can't see the YMCA sticking its neck out at this point in its long life.

Charlotte  
Jackson

Martha, thank you for the community center update. I will pass this information on to the Park at Quail Creek board of directors and encourage them to step up to the plate and be proactive in the development of this

	<p>important community project. And most importantly to me, keep it in NACA's control.</p>	
<p>Holly Skeen, CMCA</p> <p>Thu 7/9/2009 11:25 AM</p>	<p>Martha-</p> <p>On behalf of the Board of Directors for the Park at Quail Creek Homeowners Association, we are against YMCA taking over this site and/or program; it needs to be kept under the City of Austin's Control. Please add us to your list below.</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Holly Skeen, CMCA®</p> <p>Community Manager</p> <p>The Park at Quail Creek, HOA</p> <p>512-836-1383 VOICE</p> <p>512-836-1550 FAX</p> <p>Email: parkhoa@swbell.net</p> <p>Alliance Association Management Company</p> <p>An ASSOCIA Member Company</p>	