



Mayor Maguire and Edwardsville's YMCA Director Tom Verheyen Respond To Dettmers Letter To The Editor

October 22 2020 10:08 PM



On Tuesday October 20th, Riverbender.com published a letter to the editor by Mr. Bill Dettmers. In that letter Mr. Dettmers makes many false claims and accusations about the City of Wood River and the Edwardsville YMCA. In 2018, City officials reached out to the YMCA to see about a possible partnership and we are willing to come to the table monetarily to construct a new recreation center. Officials had hoped that the YMCA

might also be able to contribute monetarily to build a new recreation center in Wood River. Unfortunately, the YMCA was not able contribute for reasons described in the letter below from Edwardsville YMCA President and CEO Tom Verheyen.

After speaking with the YMCA, no one at the YMCA has ever heard of Bill Dettmers or even had any correspondence with him. Why would Bill Dettmers make all these false claims without first asking the YMCA to confirm if they are true?

Bill Dettmers claims the City of Wood River did not pursue a Public/Private Partnership, rejected the opportunity to partner with the YMCA, and turned down a \$15,000,000 YMCA that would cost the City of Wood River “zero dollars”. All these claims are utterly and totally false!

Unfortunately, the false statements by Mr. Dettmers and other individuals have not only confused the citizens of Wood River but also put the Edwardsville YMCA in a tough position. The City of Wood River apologizes to its friends at the YMCA and appreciate all the efforts in trying to support our endeavor to bring more recreation to our region. We thank them for providing the following letter in response to Mr. Dettmers claims.

Wood River Mayor Cheryl Maguire

This is the Letter To The Editor by Tom Verheyen, Director of the Edwardsville YMCA:

In response to a "Letter to the Editor" published in Riverbender.com, the Edwardsville YMCA would like to clear up some misstatements by letter writer Bill Dettmers.

In 2018, the YMCA was asked to attend a meeting with the Wood River Mayor, City Manager, and Parks and Recreation Director to discuss the possibility of the YMCA coming to Wood River.

At that meeting, the YMCA was clear that in order for a new YMCA to be built in Wood River, there would have to be a significant fundraising effort directed at Wood River businesses and individuals to cover the cost of that construction. When the Edwardsville YMCA built the Meyer Center YMCA in 2005, it cost \$10 million. The YMCA raised just over \$5 million of the construction cost and took out a loan to cover the remaining cost, which the YMCA is still paying today.

Over the past year and a half, the YMCA has been approached by members of the Wood River community requesting that the YMCA come to Wood River. We have been clear in each of the meetings, that the YMCA does not have the money to go build a new building (in fact, as we stated earlier, we are still paying off our current building), and

any effort to build/construct a new YMCA would require a major Capital Campaign and fundraising effort in addition to having the support of City Hall and other neighboring communities but once again, there was no money offer from the YMCA for construction of a YMCA in Wood River.

Like many businesses, COVID-19 has made a major impact on our current YMCA operations. We have had to downsize our staff, programs, and services, and our recovery efforts will be long-lasting. While the YMCA stands ready to serve the needs of our regional, financially our efforts are directly solely on our own operations, staff, members and programs in Edwardsville at this time.

Tom Verheyen

Edwardsville YMCA

Opinions expressed in this section are solely those of the individual authors and do not represent the views of RiverBender.com or its affiliates. We provide a platform for community voices, but the responsibility for opinions rests with their authors.