



# **Letter To The Editor: The Roundhouse Should Be Incorporated Into City's Future Plans, Response To Mayor, Verheyen**

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Mayor Maguire wrote a Letter to the Editor in which she states I made several false claims and accusations against the City of Wood River and the Edwardsville YMCA in my Letter to the Editor dated October 20th. The mayor would be justified in her assertion if she could prove her statements by comparing any deemed misrepresentation by me of her or the City position with some proof or facts to substantiate her claims. The mayor has intentionally misrepresented my statements in an attempt to establish a strawman argument rather than refute the facts that I presented which she knows are true and she cannot deny. Instead, she made additional, unsubstantiated claims and used a letter from the YMCA which did not support her claims, but actually confirmed my statements.

I want to note that Mr. Verheyen claimed I made “some misstatements” in his letter. I will gladly apologize to Mr. Verheyen and the YMCA for any misstatements I may have made. However, Mr. Verheyen will need to be specific as he made no reference to any misstatement attributable to me in his letter. If any apology is due to the YMCA it should come from the mayor.

First, in the mayor’s Letter to the Editor she claims that I stated the City did not pursue a Public/Private Partnership. This is false, in fact I stated in my Letter to the Editor that I was shocked to learn that the City had met with the YMCA. The reason for my shock was due to the response the mayor gave me in a Q and A session during the December 16, 2019 City Council meeting where she stated that the City had not pursued a Public /Private Partnership with any not-for-profit organization with respect to the proposed rec center. I would like to know why she made that false statement to me at that meeting.

Second, the mayor claimed I stated the City rejected the opportunity to partner with the YMCA. This is false. I stated that members of the City senior management team told me in a meeting on January 9th earlier this year that the City rejected the opportunity to partner with the YMCA for two reasons. The City senior managers told me the City was reluctant to assist the YMCA in its required fundraising efforts by offering to them the potential \$2.5 million dollars in grant funds the City was seeking from the State and the City didn't want to lose control of its rec program. If statements given to me by the City senior management are false, then the mayor should discuss this matter with them and not blame me.

Third, the mayor claims that I stated that the City turned down a \$15 million dollar YMCA that would cost the City "zero dollars". This is false. Here, the mayor used a deceptive ploy to take a statement out of context. She cleverly omitted the remaining part of my statement, "if all it had to contribute was the proceeds from a grant supplied by the state. "

Fourth, the mayor claims the City sought assistance from the YMCA in 2018. Here she uses the YMCA current financial position due to the Covid-19 pandemic, almost two years after the meeting, as the reason why the City didn't receive financial assistance from the YMCA. What is more curious about the mayor's claim is the statement in Mr. Verheyen's letter. He states, regarding the 2018 meeting and subsequent meetings with other individuals, the YMCA would require assistance from the City with fundraising in order for the two to enter into a partnership. The City wanted the YMCA to give it money?

As noted above, I understood the need by the YMCA for assistance in fundraising. I was critical of the City's failure to partner with the YMCA for the following reasons: 1) due to reluctance on the part of the City to assist the YMCA with its fundraising efforts, 2) due to City reluctance to contribute the potential \$2.5 million dollar grant proceeds to help bring the YMCA to Wood River, and 3) the reluctance by the City to transfer responsibility of part of its rec program to the YMCA. I should add a fourth reason, that the City requested from the YMCA, a not-for-profit organization, to provide financial assistance to the City for its own rec program.

According to Mr. Verheyen's letter, the YMCA is willing to consider discussions with the City of Wood River in the future. However, the important issue at hand is to vote "Yes" to pass the referendum question on November 3rd. The issue regarding the proposed rec center isn't whether or not to have one, I believe most would agree there is a need. Passage of the referendum will indicate the desire of the residents that we want the City to pause and properly evaluate our concerns. These concerns include the necessity for a feasibility study to properly determine the needs of the community and avoid wasteful spending. The current proposed rec center is an idea submitted by

someone and put to paper that has not been evaluated to determine if we need 1, 2, 3 or more basketball courts, a swimming pool or other services. We don't know what the cost is to build or operate it, if it will be profitable or require user fees or additional taxpayer support, what is the best way to pay for it, where to build it and how can the Roundhouse be incorporated into future City plans. Once these issues are resolved, then we can be certain that the City has taken every step to address the concerns of all residents.

**Bill Dettmers**

**Wood River**

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