



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

October 11, 2023

City of Palm Desert Council
73510 Fred Waring Drive
Palm Desert, CA 92260

Re: City of Palm Desert's Staff recommendation to Palm Desert City Council to approve a contract for Palm Desert Aquatic Center Management.

On behalf of the Family YMCA of the Desert, we are grateful for the opportunity to manage and provide a variety of experiences for our community and visitors since 2011. As safety, customer service, quality, and consistency have always been priority, we are extremely proud of all the Family YMCA of the Desert PDAC team has offered our community.

We take great pride in being a trusted and valued community partner and are thankful for the impact our Y team has made while managing the Palm Desert Aquatic Center. It is with this in mind, that we will do everything that we can to assure a smooth transition to a new vendor if that is the direction decided by this Council.

We would like to share our perspective on the information being presented today. The Y had charged the same management fee, \$165,000 from 2018-2023. In the recent RFP process, we proposed a fee of 12% of expense or \$238,323 with a 3-5% increase for the next 4 years. This appears to be \$25,677 lower than the proposed operator for year one. Something we hope Council will consider is that the mission of the Y is to provide programs that help build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all. Every dollar that the YMCA receives is used to support programs in our community that will promote this mission. We utilize our resources to improve the lives of families and seniors in the Coachella Valley. We obtain grants which allow us to provide low cost swim safety and other programming opportunities.

The YMCA does work with a marketing firm. However this is at the behest of the City, who have contracted with them directly. The marketing consultant referenced is Stephanie Greene with FG Creative. She and her team have worked hand in hand with the City for many years. She serves on the El Paseo Parking and Business Improvement District and City of Palm Desert Marketing Committee. She has an insight into marketing in the Coachella Valley, and specifically Palm Desert, that I would challenge anyone to improve upon. It is our understanding that the City wanted continuity in their marketing and that is why they contracted the services of her firm in promoting the Aquatic Center. In addition to the services of this firm, the YMCA provides their own in-house marketing in order to promote special events and activities.



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Regarding the reduction of hours, we have spoken with Staff and Council in depth on this temporary situation and presented information at the February 16, 2023 Council Meeting. There has been a documented, nationwide lifeguard shortage from 2020-current, which was created by the pandemic. We regret that we were not able to maintain the hours and we know this impacted several Palm Desert residents. In February of 2023, we reduced the operating hours from 13.5 hours per day to 11 hours per day for a period of around 6 weeks until staffing levels were restored. It was at this same time that many pools locally and across California were not able to open their doors and had frequent last minute closures. The Y's Human Resources is located in walking distance to the Aquatic Center and we have utilized our connections with DSUSD, Palm Desert High School and Xavier High School Water Polo Teams over the course of our management of PDAC.

The historical numbers representing the operator expense in the current RFP and Staff Report are not reflective of what was billed by the YMCA and contain variances of between \$300,000-\$800,000. This discrepancy has a direct impact on the recovery rate shown. It is our belief and was mentioned by City staff at the walk through meeting on August 15, 2023, that there were possibly capital improvements in the numbers provided.

Safety has been our number one priority in our management of the facility. Our policy is to have 3 certified guards at any given time. There is an added cost but this is the best practice. Our policies take into consideration the extreme heat that the guards are exposed to and rotates guards every 15 minutes. Other facilities operate like a hotel where guards sit in the same position until they are required to take their 10 minute break, around 2 hours. In the time the facility has been managed by the Y, there have been no closures for the failure to pass county inspections and there have been no serious injuries more than first aid.

In speaking with our Aquatics Director, the filters in the facility are the original ones from opening and will need to be replaced in the near future which would cause a closure of around 3 months. This is a time where all non-salaried staff would likely be laid off and then re-hired when the facility reopens. This information has been given to the City liaison as well as the estimated cost of 1.7M.



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

If selected, the Y will move for board approval of a standing committee to review all aspects of our management of PDAC. The proposed committee will consist of the following members, as well as inviting other community members and City staff to participate:

Concessions

Rick Shalhoub, Y Board Chair and owner/operator of 21 McDonalds restaurants.

Operations

Ryan Stendell, Y Board Member, Public Works Director, City of Rancho Mirage, formerly with City of Palm Desert and is familiar with PDAC operations.

Patrick Klein, Y past-Chair, General Manager, Taubman, The Gardens on El Paseo/El Paseo Village

Marketing

Riseth Lora, Y Board Member, Public Information Officer City of Coachella, former Managing Director of a Marketing Agency

Programing

Andre Pacheco, Y Board Member, Athletic Director, College of the Desert

Human Resources

Meegan Villa, Y Chair-Elect, Owner, Proper Solutions Staffing Agency

Katie Leffler, Y Board Member, Human Resources, Desert Champions, Indian Wells Tennis Gardens

In closing we would like to thank the City, the patrons of the Aquatic Center and our dedicated staff for the many wonderful years we served as the operator of the PDAC. It has been our honor and privilege to serve. Whatever is decided upon today, please know that the Family YMCA will be supportive and hopes for continuing collaborations with the City of Palm Desert.

Sincerely,

Rick Shalhoub, Board Chair Family YMCA of the Desert
Meegan Villa, Chair-elect, Family YMCA of the Desert
Patrick Klein, past-Chair, Family YMCA of the Desert
Joe Hayes, past-Chair, Family YMCA of the Desert
Nolan Sparks, past-Chair, Family YMCA of the Desert
Cindy Pieper, Board Member, Family YMCA of the Desert
Gary Galton, Board Member, Family YMCA of the Desert
Riseth Lora, Board Member, Family YMCA of the Desert
Paula Simonds, CEO, Family YMCA of the Desert