

## CHARLOTTESVILLE AREA FITNESS CLUB OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

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Earlier today, the Charlottesville Area Fitness Club Operators Association (CAFCOA) filed lawsuits against the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County for failing to properly solicit bids for a contract to provide fitness and wellness services to City and County residents. The City and the County have agreed to provide the YMCA with over \$3 million of taxpayer money and a long-term lease for \$1 per year to construct a massive fitness center in a public park. In exchange, the YMCA will provide indoor swimming to area high schools and discounted fitness and wellness services at its proposed McIntire Park location.

State law requires that local governments follow specific procedures when contracting for goods and services, and CAFCOA members were unjustly denied the opportunity to participate and offer alternatives to the YMCA proposal. This is unfair to all members of our community, not just the parties to this suit. CAFCOA members and co-plaintiffs include ACAC Fitness & Wellness Centers, Gold's Gym and Total Performance Sports and Fitness.

CAFCOA members maintain long-standing partnerships with both the City and the County, and it is with great reluctance that we pursue legal action. Over the past several years, members of the Association have reached out to the City, the County and the YMCA with solutions that do not require public funds, do not destroy public park land and minimize any future taxpayer liability. Unfortunately, no member of the Association was granted the opportunity to submit a proposal. By excluding area businesses from the procurement process, local government has done a disservice to taxpayers in our community.

CAFCOA members are confident that City and County residents would prefer that all alternatives be considered before spending \$3 million of taxpayer money on a project that will eliminate priceless green space in the City. We suggest that the City and the County conduct an independent survey to determine whether community members would support re-opening the bid process. CAFCOA would be willing to fund this initiative if the City and the County were to decline.

The Association fully supports the mission of the YMCA and its contributions to our community. However, we do not feel that constructing a large-scale fitness center is the best use of taxpayer dollars. Given the current economic climate, we believe that appropriating \$3 million for the construction of a 70,000 square-foot fitness facility in McIntire Park is a misuse of public funds, especially when other providers are in a position to offer solutions that cost less and can prevent the destruction of a public park.

The Association seeks the opportunity to submit other options to the City and the County for the provision of fitness services to its citizens. CAFCOA believes that by incorporating the best ideas from the for-profit, non-profit and public sectors, a smarter solution for solving our community's fitness and wellness needs can be developed. In fact, the City of Charlottesville's own Recreation Needs Assessment published in November 2005 agreed with this approach (Sections 7.3.5 and 7.4.3). The YMCA and other non-profit organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Club, already do great work in our community and CAFCOA seeks the most efficient way to expand these programs and services. By utilizing existing facilities, the City and the County can provide even greater access to area residents than the currently proposed plan and local governments will be able to direct increasingly scarce tax dollars to more urgent needs in the community. For these reasons, the Association seeks to suspend construction of the YMCA at McIntire Park until an open and fair bid process can be completed.

For additional information, please contact the Charlottesville Area Fitness Club Operators Association at [CAFCOA@gmail.com](mailto:CAFCOA@gmail.com) or call (434) 817-2375.