

Comments of Meredith Lonner Upon Presenting 2000+ Signature SCC Petition to the Village Board December 9, 2008

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you this evening. My name is Meredith Lonner and I am the membership coordinator for the Scarsdale Community Center and a member of its Executive Committee. In addition, I have been a resident of Scarsdale for a majority of the last 43 years with an 11 year stint in San Francisco.

I am also one of the newly elected members of the Citizens Nominating Committee. I mention this because given that, with rare exception, the Mayor and the Trustees run in an uncontested election, the Nominating Committee election is the only way in which the citizens in our community have a voice in the selection of our elected officials. When I was elected last month, 385 fellow Scarsdalians turned out to vote. My recollection is that in prior years, the turnout has been comparable. Simply stated, about 2% of all eligible voters determine, albeit indirectly, who will be sitting in your seats, responsible for the future direction of our community.

On the other hand, over 1,200 families having an estimated 4,000 individual family members have become members of the SCC. These numbers represent over 20% of the citizenry of Scarsdale. These families come from all five school areas in the Village with fairly equal representation. They have committed nearly \$700,000 in third year dues to this project, which we have held in escrow since we completed our membership campaign in May of 2005. We have been told by many experts in the field of building community centers that collecting dues from a membership before a shovel has been put into the ground is unprecedented and should be viewed as an overwhelming show of support. Over the past three-and-a-half years we have experienced about 4% attrition, representing about 50 member families.

However, tonight I am presenting to the Village Board, a petition in support of the SCC, with over 2000 signatures. We have collected both electronic and hard signatures and we have reviewed both to remove duplicates and invalid addresses. I would like to take a minute to read the text of the petition for the record:

We, the undersigned qualified voters in the Village of Scarsdale, support building and operating a community center in Scarsdale, including aquatic, fitness and multi-purpose facilities, subject to the reasonable expectation that the Center's finances will not adversely impact the Scarsdale Village property tax rate. We hereby petition the Scarsdale Village Board of Trustees to support the project and to work with the Scarsdale Community Center, Inc. to resolve open questions concerning the site, financial plan and project timeline so that this project can move forward expeditiously.

Perhaps the most telling aspect of how wide the support for a community center is, is that 910 signatures are from non-SCC members. These signatures also represent a uniform percentage from each of the school areas. Thus, about 45% of our petition signatures represent an additional group of supporters.

This show of support represents an overwhelming mandate for action unprecedented in Scarsdale history. We have far to go before the first shovel goes into the ground. We have studies to do and drawings to complete. We have a capital campaign to organize and execute. However, the citizens of Scarsdale have spoken as clearly as at any time in the past four decades that I have lived here, and they want a community center. In one of the late Irving Sloan's many columns in support of the SCC he noted that "whenever a governmental action imposes a benefit that may not have an equal impact on the whole community, the decision is a balancing act. In a democratic society the individual must at times yield to the common or the greater good of the whole community." It is time for the Village to take on the mantle of leadership and work with the SCC Board to make this community center a reality.

Thank you.