

**Symmes Advisory Committee Public Use Working Group  
Meeting Minutes, 20 January 2003  
Symmes Hospital Conference Room**

**Members Attending:** Steve Frigand, Greg Blass, Ellen Kushner, Deb O'Donnell, Suzi Lubar, Harris Band, Ann LeRoyer, Brian Rehrig

**Also in Attendance:** Carolyn Kenney, Jeff Linn (HealthPoint, Care Design)

The meeting was called to order by Steve Frigand (as acting chair) at 7:15 pm.

**Meeting Minutes**

The PUWG minutes of December 3, 2002, and January 7, 2003, were approved.

**Announcements**

The Public Forum will be held on Thursday, February 13, at the High School.

The Cemetery Commission will present its proposal for a memorial grove to the Symmes Advisory Committee on Thursday, January 23. PUWG members are invited to attend and comment.

Brian will schedule daytime meeting with the Medical Use Group to visit wellness centers.

Alternative PUWG meeting days of the week were suggested to meet other conflicting schedules.

The next meeting is set for Monday, February 3.

**Presentation by Jeff Linn about HealthPoint**

By invitation, Jeff Linn spoke about his experience with HealthPoint, a large fitness and wellness center and Care Group hospital affiliate in Waltham, and Care Design, a children's recreation club program that he established as a subsidiary business. He stated that it is most important to have a specific market focus for a new community/wellness center of the kind the PUWG has been discussing. It can't be all things to all people. The physical plant has to be clearly designed and planned. HealthPoint ran into financial problems because of too much common space that did not raise revenues, as well as a variety of property management problems in general. The facility is about 140,000 s.f. total, with 15,000 common space, 22,000 s.f. for Celtics training, 6,000 s.f. for food services, and the rest in pools, fitness facilities and rehabilitation/therapy spaces.

Jeff described various problems with the management and market mix of the original HealthPoint programs and facilities, and some of the new things that have been tried, such as his company that develops a "kid's club" within the health club to encourage families to join. Different parts of the building have been sold off to other specialized providers such as his. He believes that family orientation is a good and profitable market for educational programs and long-term fitness memberships. Birthday parties also raise extra revenues, though food and beverage facilities alone do not pay for themselves in such a center.

He noted that medical wellness centers are not always compatible with non-profit oriented recreation centers, such as YMCAs. He stressed that space allocation and planning are very important, but the facility has to be flexible in design to accommodate multiple and changing needs and to take advantage of the most profitable kinds of programs.

There is still a need for high-end quality fitness and wellness facilities with a focus on families in the area. Memberships can be pre-sold to help underwrite the costs of construction. Sometimes employers and health providers offer subsidies to pay for memberships. Jeff's target market would be families with an income over \$75,000, although some PUWG members expressed concerns about affordability for many families and for senior citizens, who could also benefit from such a community resource.

## **Other Comments**

Carolyn raised the idea of keeping part of the hospital building under town ownership for a community center or other activities, and selling off other parts of the site to pay off the debt. This led to wide-ranging discussion of the local economy, Town Meeting, overrides and the schools.

Brian (who arrived late) explained that three alternatives will be presented at the February 13 public meeting, and they will be reviewed at the Symmes Advisory Committee meeting on Thursday, January 23. There are still many unanswered questions about how a wellness center could work here without a hospital or other equity partners. He asked whether PUWG should take a position on one or another of the alternatives, but no decision was taken.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.