

Dave Nyczepir, The Desert Sun

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Desert Hot Springs youth center seeks funds

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Coachella Valley will seek the youth center grant



(Photo: Jay Calderon/The Desert Sun)

DESERT HOT SPRINGS – The Boys & Girls Clubs of Coachella Valley will seek a grant to keep the Desert Hot Springs Health & Wellness Center Youth Facility afloat through December.

On Dec. 18, 2013, the City Council terminated its youth facility use/lease agreement with the Boys & Girls Club, effective in June, and directed staff to renegotiate the contract.

Desert Hot Springs paid the club to operate the facility while also covering utility expenses at a cost of about \$321,025 a year, but since declaring a fiscal emergency on Nov. 19, 2013, the city has had to cut costs — jeopardizing the facility's continued operation without a \$106,512.50 Regional Access Project Foundation grant.

“We have really, in the short time we’ve been in Desert Hot Springs — three to four years, made tremendous progress with the children in that community,” said Jim Ducatte, CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Coachella Valley.

“We continue to provide programs and services that reach more and more kids and produce great results and want to keep impacting children.”

The city lacks parks and recreation services, Ducatte said, so the Boys & Girls Club fills the void to avoid leaving local children with nothing to do.

The Regional Access Project Foundation is a public benefit corporation addressing unmet health, mental health and juvenile intervention needs in eastern Riverside County through financial and technical assistance to nonprofits.

City Attorney Steve Quintanilla prepared a grant application for the city on the Desert Hot Springs Health & Wellness Foundation’s behalf and made his presentations Tuesday — recusing himself from voting as a volunteer Regional Access Project Foundation board member.

“There were some concerns expressed by board members about whether or not this was a bailout and how that would be perceived by other cities,” Quintanilla said. “But this has nothing to do with Desert Hot Springs. This has to do with the children.”

A subcommittee was established to ensure the Boys & Girls Club remained committed to running the facility despite the termination of its use/lease agreement, at which point the club offered to file a grant application in lieu of the city.

To ask for more than \$160,512.50 would be impossible, Quintanilla said, but the money will buy the city until the end of the year to establish a sustainability plan that could include additional revenue from a vacant parcel tax increase on the June ballot, going with a different operator and altering the Health & Wellness Foundation’s bylaws so it can fundraise for the Youth Facility.

Quintanilla said he’ll advise the city to request operating proposals from the likes of the YMCA, Desert Health Care District and any other organization with the wherewithal that might offer the same level of service as the Boys & Girls Club for a low price.

“This is the first I’m hearing of it, and I don’t know what position we’ll take,” Ducatte said. “We just celebrated our 47th anniversary in Indio, and I hope one day to get beyond that point in Desert Hot Springs.”

Quintanilla also threw out the possibilities of naming the Youth Facility after an individual for a price and endowments, though he remains confident the Boys & Girls Club will get the Regional Access Project Foundation grant.

“Desert Hot Springs is being sued by the Police Officers Association and racking up bills in the process, so I don’t know where we’re going to get this money otherwise,” Quintanilla said. “That’s the tragedy of this situation because everyone in the community wants to keep this facility open.”

COMMENTS



• [Joey Mendoza](#) · Top Commenter · [Somewhere](#)

what a shame that city attorney Quintanilla chooses to implicate the POA as the demise of the Wellness Center when he was clearly the person who advised the council to move forward with unfair labor practices against the Police Officer's contract. But of course he is getting paid right? Disgusting!! What kind of shaninagans is Sanchez and his crony's trying to sell the people..I say RECALL!

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· [1](#) · [March 28 at 10:22pm](#)



○ [Joey Mendoza](#) · Top Commenter · [Somewhere](#)

No one is claiming that the facility or facilities aren't needed but your statement of putting the police department at fault, for the expenses the city is incurring or will incur is inaccurate given the fact that the implemented salary cuts to the public safety were done illegally. Youth programs are necessary and if this story is about youth programs why even mention the ongoing situation with the public safety since it is my understanding there is a court hearing coming up in a month or so. Those are low blows. The city would have not been sued had you not advised the council to move forward with making the cuts to them without conferring, as I recalled that special session. In fact, Sanchez claims he has the expertise in working with the youth and youth programs, Betts claims he has the expertise of being a business man an...[See More](#)

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· March 29 at 8:33am



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[Craig Spector-Howell](#) · Top Commenter · Works at [Angel View, Inc.](#)

This isn't about the kids, this isn't about making the community safe, this is about Mayor Sanchez getting his job back and humiliating the Boys and Girls club. On December 17, 2013 Jim Ducatte was publicly dressing -down by Mayor Sanchez. His childish, petulant, disrespectful treatment of Mr. Ducatte demonstrated what his agenda is, he wants his old job back. Mayor Sanchez acted like a (because he was) a fired employee that was now the boss. It was painful and embarrassing to watch, while council member Betts, sat back and watched the show and called it "fascinating." Council member Pye was the only one that stood up for decorum during the un-professional and childlike display. The next day they voted to stop payment and to remove the boys and girls club of Coachella valley. Now, after their move, they are looking hand...[See More](#)

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[Steven Quintanilla](#) · [UCLA](#)

Steven Quintanilla

The kids of Desert Hot Springs community really need the Desert Hot Springs Health & Wellness Youth Facility to remain open and I am committed to do what I can to keep the facility open for the children of this hard working blue collar community--regardless of which agency ends up operating it. Many of these children are at risk and/or disadvantaged in one way or the other. Many of them don't have the opportunities many of us take for granted. We need facilities like this to help ensure that these children will become responsible, caring and self sufficient citizens.

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· [March 28 at 10:38pm](#)



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[Maggie Jackson](#) · Top Commenter · [AIU Buckhead](#)

Wonder if they considered this when they purchased all those flashy new cars and SUV's...

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· [March 29 at 10:50pm](#)