

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Gulati and the Pottstown Y

Pottstown owes much to Charles Gulati. Gulati has agreed to purchase the Pottstown YMCA building on North Adams Street, spend millions of dollars to replace or repair the HVAC system and other critical infrastructure, and lease part of the building back to the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA for at least five years.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Pottstown YMCA members will continue to have access to the "North" pool, the gymnasium, and a fitness center.

Gulati will seek fitness-related businesses to lease other parts of the building. The Y building will become a taxable entity.

The Gulati family has a record of rescuing struggling businesses. Charles's father, Jack, emigrated to the United States from India as a teenager in 1958. After graduating from college in Minnesota, he ran a number of successful businesses before starting Reading's Fidelity Technologies Corp. in 1988, which his three sons joined.

In 2009, the senior Gulati bought Stokesay Castle, a 1931 medieval mansion house just outside Reading that had been converted to a restaurant and banquet hall. When the business failed, Gulati bought the property at auction and invested \$3 million into the structure, making it a regional showpiece for fine dining, weddings, banquets, and events.

As his brothers continued to manage Fidelity Technologies, Charles took over as President and CEO of Stokesay Castle.

Early in 2015, the Gulati family took over operations and manage-

ment of the 1931 SunnyBrook Ballroom in Lower Pottsgrove. Once one of the East's premier dance floors, SunnyBrook had also fallen on hard times and was purchased in 2008 by the non-profit SunnyBrook Foundation. The Foundation turned to the Gulatis to make the business self-sustaining. The Gulatis bought the property two years later, invested \$3 million, and opened a restaurant called Gatsby's. Charles Gulati serves as SunnyBrook's CEO.

Given Gulati's record, we should have every reason for optimism. Of course, the entire YMCA facility will no longer be available to Pottstown members, but it's much better than the alternative — closing the building. And as Gulati attracts new businesses to make Pottstown a fitness mecca, Pottstown residents may be far better off.

Many of those involved in the fight to keep the Pottstown Y open likely have more faith in Gulati, who is committed to Pottstown, than in Shaun Elliott, President and CEO of Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA.



Charles Gulati

Elliott insensitive handling of the proposed Pottstown closure while the Y builds Taj Mahals in the suburbs has left Pottstonians with a very bad taste in their mouths.

In a recent press release, Elliott pledged the YMCA "will continue to subsidize the cost of its service delivery to the Pottstown community."

Advocates for the Pottstown YMCA must remain vigilant, press for full disclosure on the YMCA's plans, and demand representation on the Y board.



The YMCA's "North" swimming pool will remain open to YMCA members.