

April 5, 2017

**Mayor Thomas Roach & Members of the Common Council
City Hall
250 Main Street
White Plains, New York 10601**

Dear Mayor Roach & Members of the Common Council:

The undersigned neighborhood associations represent thousands of residents in the City of White Plains who oppose The French American School of New York's (FASNY) latest proposal for a regional school complex on the former Ridgeway Country Club property.

In 2015, FASNY lost a key vote by the Common Council, effectively killing the project. FASNY filed a lawsuit against the City. Despite a consensus view that the City was on strong legal ground the Common Council on a 4-3 vote entered into an agreement whereby FASNY would put on hold its litigation if the City would review a new proposal which eliminated the pre-school and lower school from the proposed complex.

In reality, FASNY's plan for 640 students plus teachers and other staff is Phase I of the earlier plan with the exception that the so-called Conservancy would be significantly reduced in size and development plans for the remaining acreage are curiously absent. Interestingly, the School has increased the student population of the middle school and high school from 478 in May of 2014 to 640, a 33.9% increase. This of course does not include teachers, administrators, staff and delivery people.

One of the most unusual elements of the new application was the request that the Common Council remove the section of the property on which they wish to build from the City's list of environmentally sensitive sites, which would be unprecedented in the City. The entire former Ridgeway Country Club has, for many years been recognized as an environmentally sensitive property. In 2013, the Common Council went out of its way to state that the entire property was an environmentally sensitive site due to its importance to area storm water management. The property is a key part of the Mamaroneck River system and has acted as an integral part of the storm water flood retention system. In response to FASNY's effort to change the property's designation the City commissioned two new consultant reports confirming that the parcel is environmentally sensitive. Also, the City's Commissioner of Planning submitted a letter supporting the parcel's designation as an environmentally sensitive site. A few weeks ago the Common Council resoundingly voted that the property is indeed an environmentally sensitive site.

The FASNY request to change the designation of the site was an obvious and transparent effort to circumvent the environmental laws of White Plains which require a super-majority vote for any development on an environmentally sensitive site (ESS).

The other significant and frankly unbelievable change in the new FASNY plan is that it proposes to use Ridgeway as the main entrance for the School. FASNY's proposal is in direct conflict with the Common Council's emphatic decision in 2013 that Ridgeway could not be used for numerous reasons of which the most important concerned safety issues. It is estimated that the FASNY complex would generate over 1,000 vehicular trips on Ridgeway in the morning and afternoon peak periods. FASNY recognizes that this increase would result in a Level of Service classification of "D" which the City's own internal analysis found unsatisfactory for residential neighborhoods. Since 2013, Ridgeway has experienced significant traffic increases during weekday rush hours with traffic often backing up from Mamaroneck Avenue to the former golf club.

Simply put, the two-lane, narrow Ridgeway cannot safely accommodate FASNY's dramatic increase in projected traffic. Ridgeway is essentially lined with single-family homes along its frontage from Old Mamaroneck Road to North Street. Numerous local streets intersect with it, many of which have limited sightlines. It serves as a key access road to the White Plains High School from neighborhoods all over the City. Most importantly, Ridgeway Elementary School is situated on Ridgeway at the intersection of Mamaroneck Avenue which is already difficult for drivers and children on foot to navigate. Should the FASNY complex be built gridlock will result encouraging drivers to enter the local narrow streets intensifying the danger to pedestrians and bicyclists. Lastly, traffic levels of this magnitude will delay emergency vehicles presenting unacceptable risks to the both residents and others requiring immediate response.

FASNY has been relentlessly hostile toward those who reasonably oppose their complex. They have undertaken a well-financed, slick public relations campaign to demonize and marginalize any opponents. Incredibly, FASNY attack the homeowners who pay the City's real estate taxes, whereas FASNY which will place major demands on City services is tax exempt. FASNY has no one to blame but itself. It purchased the property without normal contingencies, virtually unheard of among non-profits.

FASNY's plan continues to be inconsistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and presents the affected neighborhoods in the south end with unacceptable levels of traffic that will adversely impact the health, safety and welfare of residents especially children.

The Gedney Association

North Street Area Civic Association

Rosedale Residential Association

Haviland Manor Neighborhood Assn.

Fisher Hill Association

Carhart Neighborhood Association

Club Pointe Homeowners Assn.

Maple Moor Pond Association

Glenbrooke Homeowners Assn.

Stewart/Ross Neighborhood Association