



Gedney Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HAS FASNY CUT A SECRET DEAL WITH MAYOR ROACH'S ADMINISTRATION AND CITY STAFF?

WHITE PLAINS NY, MARCH 10, 2017 – The Gedney Association, one of a growing list of civic associations opposed to the proposed French American School of New York (FASNY) project today questioned whether a “secret deal” has been made between FASNY and Mayor Roach’s administration and City staff to supports its “alternative plan” to build a new school on the former Ridgeway Country Club property.

According to John E. Sheehan, president of The Gedney Association, concern about a possible “back-room” agreement stems from a letter recently submitted by FASNY’s law firm, Zarin & Steinmetz, that was responded to by Avrutine & Associates, PLLC, the law firm representing The Gedney Association.

The corresponding letters are in reaction to a Stipulation of Settlement reached in September 2016 that resulted from a lawsuit filed by FASNY against Mayor Roach and the Common Council back in September 2015. That lawsuit challenged an earlier decision by the City that denied the discontinuance of a portion of Hathaway Lane and FASNY’s original attempts to secure a special permit and site plan application approval for a school on the site.

As stated in the Avrutine letter:

The Zarin letter appears to suggest that a “secret deal” exists between FASNY and the Common Council which is not set forth in the Stipulation of Settlement entered into by the parties. In that regard, Mr. Zarin states that a failure by the Common Council to “delist” Parcel A as an Environmentally Sensitive Site or Feature (hereinafter “ESS”)... “would undermine one of the essential premises of the Stipulation of Settlement that FASNY’s limitation on its reduced Alternative School Plan to Parcel A would only require a majority vote”. By that statement, Mr. Zarin has taken the position that the Stipulation of Settlement requires (i) that the Common Council “delist” Parcel A as an ESS; and (ii) that it approve the Alternative Plan by a simple “majority vote”.

This assertion is particularly alarming because the Stipulation of Settlement sets forth no such “essential premise”. Instead, it states at paragraph 2(c) that the Common Council shall “determine whether the Alternative Plan is on, involves or affects any ‘Environmentally Sensitive Site or Feature’ as defined in Section 2.4 of the City Zoning Ordinance.” It in no manner contains a directive that the Common Council “delist” Parcel A. Instead, it requires only that the Common Council consider the issue.

“While we were always suspicious about the Stipulation, given the strong legal position of the City in defending against the FASNY lawsuit, we are nonetheless shocked by the FASNY attorney’s letter suggesting that Mayor Roach made a private agreement with FASNY despite The Mayor’s statements indicating quite the opposite,” Sheehan said. This is deeply troubling and frankly throws the entire Stipulation into question.”

The Avrutine letter also points out FASNY'S veiled threat to the Common Council, should its demands not be met:

The Zarin letter also purports to threaten the Common Council with litigation should it not accede to FASNY's demands. This cynical attempt to intimidate the Common Council is causing great consternation in the community. It is truly a sad circumstance that FASNY has now degraded the process to the point of attempting to bully the Common Council into approving its ill-conceived project.

“Based on the Zarin letter, it certainly appears that something inappropriate is taking place between FASNY and the Mayor's office,” Sheehan added. “If there is any conspiring going on we're confident the truth will ultimately reveal itself.”

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