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## Regional Green Groups Stand By FASNY

[Sam Barron](#) | Sep 18, 2012 | [Comments 0](#)



Speakers at FASNY's Friday press conference pictured from left to right are Leigh Draper, New York – New Jersey Trail Conference, Dr. Michael Rubbo, Teatown Lake Reservation, Ned Sullivan, Scenic Hudson, John Botti, FASNY Conservancy Taskforce, Mischa Zabotin, Chairman, FASNY Board of Trustees, Patti Bressman, Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation, Zywia Wojnar, Pace University Law School Energy & Climate Center.

As the debate over whether to approve the special permit application made by the [French-American School of New York](#) (FASNY) to run a regional pre-k through grade 12 school in White Plains continues, conservation groups across Westchester have banded together to voice their approval of the proposed facility and the Greens to Green Conservancy included in the plan.

At a press conference Friday at the FASNY property on the site of the former Ridgeway Country Club, 16 environmental groups signed a letter to the White Plains Common Council expressing their support for FASNY's application.

The letter comes ahead of a Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) public hearing being held on Wednesday. Of the total 130 acres, FASNY plans on turning over 84 acres as a nature preserve, open to the public. The plan will also create 3.7 miles of walking trails. The remaining 46 acres will be used for development of the school, including buildings, ball fields and parking lots.

Four key points referred to in the letter specify that the FASNY proposal protects, restores and rehabilitates the wildlife habitat on the site; protects and restores the quality and ecological function of water resources; protects scenic resources; and promotes good urban planning and sustainable design.

"We are writing to voice our strong support for the proposal by [FASNY] to create a new campus and the Greens to Green Conservancy in White Plains," the letter states. "Turning two-thirds of this defunct private golf course into an 84-acre public nature preserve—at no cost to the city in acquiring, developing or maintaining the facility—will deliver significant social, environmental, educational and economic benefits to White Plains and its citizens. The FASNY proposal takes advantage of the rich opportunities for economic development, recreation, environmental health and scenic beauty offered by conserving and restoring natural assets and making them publicly accessible," the letter continues.

At the press conference, advocates representing groups including [Teatown Lake Reservation](#), which has been hired by FASNY to study the site and design the nature conservancy, Scenic Hudson, Stone Barns and Walkable Westchester said that the opportunities presented by the campus are endless.

"This is an example of how open space can enhance the personal commitment to health," Lee Draper, of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, said.

Jon Botti, a member of the FASNY Board of Trustees, said the project would create jobs and re-purpose an existing facility.

"If this was were left to the market, it could be purchased and turned into residential subdivisions," Botti said. "We have this unique combination of positive development. It's going to be terrific for the community."

The project has been met with much controversy. Many neighbours in the Gedney neighbourhood are opposed to the plan. Signs against the project dot homeowners' yards leading up to the site and residents are expected to speak out against the project at Wednesday's public hearing. Many residents claim the neighbourhood cannot sustain another regional institution that would increase traffic on local streets and prefer the property fall under a proposed rezoning legislation that would create severe setbacks and density regulations to protect open space in the area. This proposed zoning district (Open Space Recreation

District) is also before the Common Council, with public hearings being held almost simultaneously with the FASNY special permit hearings.

The letter presented at the press conference acknowledges that the FASNY proposal is in the midst of a SEQRA review and states: "... We are aware that some citizens in the nearby neighbourhood have raised concerns about the project, most notably its potential traffic impacts. These concerns should be given the hard look SEQRA requires and mitigation measures should be identified as appropriate."

The 16 signers of the letter are: Eban Goodstein, Director, Bard Center for Environmental Policy Scenic Hudson, Bard MBA Program in Sustainability; William H. Schlesinger, Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies; Katie Ginsberg, Executive Director Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation; Janet Harckham, Director, Green Schools Coalition of Westchester; Clifford Schneider, Executive Director Hudson River Valley Environmental Education Institute; Jonathan F.P. Rose, Founder and President, Jonathan Rose Companies Westchester County, Green Real Estate Policy, Planning and Development; Edward Goodell, Executive Director, New York – New Jersey Trail Conference; Zywia Wojnar, Research Director, Pace Energy & Climate Center, Pace Law School; Ned Sullivan, President, Scenic Hudson; Jill Isenbarger, Executive Director, Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture; Kevin Carter, Executive Director, Teatown Lake Reservation; Jane Daniels, author, Walkable Westchester; Candace Schafer, Executive Director, Westchester Land Trust; Lucy R. Waletzky, member Westchester County Pest management Committee; Steve Ricker, Director Westmoreland Sanctuary; Benjamin Van Doren, Intel Science Talent Search, 5<sup>th</sup> Place in USA, WPHS graduate 2012.



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