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Supporters, Neighbors, Clash Over FASNY Traffic Impact

Hundreds of people attended the second public hearing discussing FASNY's Environmental Impact Study. The school is petitioning the City for a permit to build on the former Ridgeway Country Club property.

By [Zach Oliva](#) | [Email the author](#) | October 18, 2012

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Opposing neighbors again clashed with French American School of New York (FASNY) supporters Wednesday during the second public discussion of the school's proposal to construct a campus on the former site of the Ridgeway Country Club.

FASNY's proposal has been met with resistance from neighbors who say the campus will alter their neighborhood and decrease property values. FASNY representatives, meanwhile, say a plan is in place to mitigate many of the concerns, including traffic, which emerged as a key issue Wednesday night.

Neighbors say daily traffic will clog local roads that weren't designed for the drop-off of 1,200 students and 250 staff members every morning. FASNY officials say staggered drop-off times and an on-campus space for bringing students to the campus will reduce wait times to only seconds during peak traffic hours.

Graham Trelsted, a traffic consultant hired by FASNY, told the Common Council he expects wait times along Ridgeway to increase less than 36 seconds during the morning drop-off. Traffic will be even less of an issue during the afternoon because most FASNY students participate in after school activities and will leave at different times, he said.

Some neighbors see things differently. Many of the speakers said they have lived in the area for decades and expect FASNY parents to cut through their quiet residential neighborhoods on a daily basis.

"It would become a cut through street no matter what they say," said Joanne Dunphy, who has lived on Fairway Dr. for 38 years. Dunphy also said she is worried about flood waters building up south of the property as fields that currently hold water are turned into buildings and parking lots.

While addressing the Common Council, Dunphy warned that other unforeseen affects like pollution, noise and traffic will be both "damaging" and "irreparable".

Mischa Zobotin, chairman of the FASNY board of trustees, called the traffic concerns a "legitimate issue", but said the proposed plan to keep traffic off

of Ridgeway will prevent any significant back-ups in the area.

"We're not going to pigeon hole a property onto a dense street or dense area," Zabotin said. "We've got the luxury of being able to configure our property in a way as to minimize traffic."

Zabotin also said he is confident the school will be able to prevent parents from cutting through residential neighborhoods surrounding the property. As a private school, he said FASNY would be able to ban parents who cut through neighborhoods from being able to drop off their kids.

"If you screw up, you're out, you lose your drop-off privileges," said Zabotin. "We have a very clear, very enforceable, traffic policy and people don't mess with it or they lose their access to the school."

Along with traffic, many of those opposing the proposal mentioned the proximity of the campus to surrounding houses. Along with an 84-acre nature conservancy on the northern edge of the property, FASNY's proposal includes the construction of an upper, middle and lower school totaling 230,863 sq ft., three playgrounds, four tennis courts, four soccer fields, a six lane track, a basketball court, baseball and softball diamonds and 428 parking spaces.

Claudia Jaffe, who has lived in the area for 17 years, said the proposal would add a parking lot only a few dozen feet from one of her neighbor's homes.

"FASNY's proposal calls for us in the immediate Gedney neighborhood to suffer consequences," she said. "Don't tell me it's safer, don't tell me it's an improvement and don't mask it by calling for the conservancy when you know you are doing it on the backs of people who live in this neighborhood."

The list of speakers, a mix of supporters and people objecting to the project, again ran late into the night. Many of the topics were continued from the [first public hearing](#) in September. A third public hearing was scheduled for Oct. 30 because not everyone had an opportunity to speak.

Several times during the evening White Plains Mayor Thomas Roach had to remind the audience to refrain from applause. About 60 people filled the White Plains Common Council chambers throughout the evening. Many more watched the hearing on television screens in the hallway outside or in City Hall's entryway.

The two sides of the project were easy to identify, wearing either green shirts and stickers to support the project or red buttons to oppose it.

Written comments are also being received if mailed to the City Clerk, City Hall at 255 Main St., White Plains, NY 10601.

FASNY officials will consider all comments from both public hearings while preparing a final proposal for the Common Council's consideration.

Click [here](#) to view the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the project. A copy of the DEIS will also be available for view at the [White Plains Public Library](#).

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LOVE MY WP

9:40 am on Friday, October 19, 2012

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I think it was horribly unprofessional for Zarin to whine like a kid that he sat there for 4 hours to hear only 2 pro-FASNY speakers. At the September meeting, I stood there listening to mostly pro-FASNY. It was very commendable for Mayor Roach to agree to another night for those who left. There was no reason for that except to be accommodating yet again. Hey Zarin- sometimes things don't work out the way you want. Buck up and except it like a man.

Reply

Hugh Marshall

8:08 am on Monday, October 22, 2012

Who is Zarin?

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Joan's WP

10:23 am on Monday, October 22, 2012

Hugh, I thought you were paying attention. Zarin is the attorney representing FASNY.

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