

Ridgeway upkeep irks neighbors

Grounds care at the former golf course may not be up to par

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WHITE PLAINS—The former Ridgeway Country Club, which just last year had manicured greens, has been described by neighbors as “unkempt,” “sloppy” and “haphazard” since the French-American School of New York bought it in January.

Several neighbors also voiced concerns about a lack of security and fire hazards from wide swaths of browning grass clippings left on the greens.

“I think it’s unfortunate,” said Steven Gould, 66, who has lived up the street from Ridgeway since 1982. “It does detract from the neighborhood. I’m surprised they wouldn’t focus on keeping it up.”

FASNY disputed the claims, saying it has marshaled significant resources to maintain the look and security of the 129-acre site. The school is seeking approval to build a \$60 million campus on Ridgeway, consolidating its campuses in Larchmont, Scarsdale and Mamaroneck, but many White Plains neighbors, including those interviewed for this story, are against the development.

Padraic Lee, 55, who lives near the course, said youth mischief and trespassing on the property had increased



A mower cuts the overgrown grass along a fairway at the former Ridgeway Country Club in White Plains on July 13. Local residents surrounding the former golf club are concerned over the proposed plans by the new owners to build a multimillion-dollar school campus and the effects on their properties. MATTHEW BROWN/THE JOURNAL NEWS

since FASNY took over.

“I never see security anymore,” he said.

Police reports over the past three months show few incidents on the property, with most of the calls coming from FASNY’s grounds supervisor, not neighbors.

Mischa Zabolin, FASNY’s board of trustees chairman, said the school recently increased property security.

He added that the school never intended to maintain the location as a golf course. But, he said, it is trimming and mowing the space daily, though with a far smaller staff than Ridgeway once had, meaning the crew mows about two holes a day.

He explained that the grounds have been brown at times to allow clippings to dry before being picked up.

“We’re dedicating significant resources to the maintenance and the security of this property in a manner as neighborly as we said we would,” Zabolin said. “I would hope the neighborhood recognizes we’re doing the best job as we can.”

He acknowledged that there was greater sensitivity over the property’s maintenance since FASNY took over, but argued that the school’s approach was more environmental than the upkeep of a golf course, with no watering saving 1 million

gallons a year and no use of herbicides or pesticides on the site.

City Hall had heard several complaints from neighbors regarding upkeep on the property, said city Chief of Staff John Callahan. He and Building Commissioner Damon Amadio met with FASNY representatives this month to discuss those issues and the city will continue to monitor the maintenance of the site, he said.

“They said of all of the concerns that they would take care of them and they would be addressed,” Callahan said. “I haven’t heard any more complaints.”

Neighbors have noticed

improvements in recent weeks, but appeared to be far from impressed.

“They say they will be a good neighbor, but is this a good neighbor? I don’t know,” said Nina Blumenfeld, 74, who complained that the view of the course from her back yard now looks “like straw.”

Another neighbor, Dan Seidel, has been a vocal critic of FASNY’s building plans but supported its upkeep work.

Since the land was no longer being watered or cut daily, he said, there has been far less flooding.

“On my side, I have no complaints,” he said.