

Preserve hyped in school plans

Neighbors oppose FASNY campus for Ridgeway

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WHITE PLAINS — The French-American School of New York laid out plans Monday night for a \$60 million campus at the former Ridgeway Country Club that would include academic buildings, athletic fields, parking lots and would leave 60-plus acres as publicly accessible open space to be known as "Gedney Preserve."

"I'm convinced that no other buyer could approach this property in as socially responsible a manner as we have," said Mischa Zobotin, chairman of the FASNY board of trustees, during the the Common Council work session.

FASNY purchased the 129-acre property for \$11 million in January with the intention of consolidating its schools in Larchmont, Mamaroneck and Scarsdale onto one campus with facilities for 1,200 students in nursery school through grade 12 and 250 staff members.

The plan is opposed by the Gedney Association, a homeowners group that claims the school will reduce the tax base and property values, increase demand on city infrastructure and cause traffic and environmental problems.

The school says that in addition to creating open space for public use, the project will create more than 500

construction jobs and, once opened, pump more than \$14 million a year into the local economy.

FASNY attorney Michael Zarin said the school's plan conformed with the city's comprehensive plan, provided safe and adequate traffic flow, and preserves the character of the community.

Other FASNY representatives said new buildings, parking and athletic fields will be clustered along the Ridgeview Avenue side of the property and be constructed using green techniques.

While last night's presentation was an early step in what will likely be a long approval process, it could all be for naught if the city approves proposed zoning changes that would severely restrict development of FASNY's property, along with several other open space parcels.

Next month, the council is expected to extend a moratorium on open space development until May 2013, as it continues to study the zoning changes.

Zarin said FASNY's plan is "consistent with the intent" of the new zoning being considered.

Throughout the presentation FASNY officials emphasized creation of the Gedney Preserve.

Zobotin said the school is working with the Westchester Land Trust to ensure that the open space will be accessible to the public and maintained without the use of taxpayer funds.

"This preserve will represent a jewel in lower Westchester," Zobotin said.