



Gedney Association

P.O. Box 134 • Gedney Station • White Plains, NY 10605

April 9, 2012

Updates: FASNY and the Wetlands Dam

Dear Neighbors—

Beginning several years ago, the board of the Gedney Association meets with the Mayor each spring to discuss neighborhood concerns and activities. This year's meeting, with Mayor Roach, took place a few days ago. In addition to the board members and the Mayor, Chief of Staff and Corporation Counsel John Callahan, Public Works Commissioner Bud Nicoletti and Planning Commissioner Sue Habel were also in attendance.

The meeting was very informative and we thank the Mayor, Corporation Counsel and the Commissioners for taking the time to meet with us.

The Wetlands Dam: perhaps the most important information we received concerns the dam located on the property owned by the French American School. The dam is located within a federally designated wetland, the only such designated wetland in all of White Plains. The dam is located at the southern end of the larger lake on the property adjacent to several homes along Ridgeway and Green Lawn Nursery and across Ridgeway from the Ridgeway Alliance Church and Nursery School.

Commissioner Nicoletti reported:

- The dam is compromised and leaking water. Although there is no immediate danger of complete failure, the New York State Department of Conservation (DEC) has instructed FASNY to take all appropriate steps to secure the dam and protect the neighboring residents and properties. Commissioner Nicoletti, as the city's storm water officer, is overseeing the efforts.
- The dam is 12 to 15 feet high and holds back 10,000,000 gallons of water
- The dam is earthen and has not been properly maintained for many years
- Part of the required maintenance is to remove all significant vegetation (trees, bushes) currently growing on the dam. As the DEC review proceeds, several critical changes to the dam will have

to be made to ensure the safety of all those who live and work down stream.

Some important history concerning the Wetlands Dam: the dam was constructed by the Ridgeway Country Club many years ago as part of an effort to capture water to aid in the irrigation of the golf course.

When FASNY purchased the property, it discontinued the irrigation of the property. Without water being drawn from the lake, the lake grew larger. Concerned members of the community noticed the rising levels of the lake and the resultant additional pressure on the dam. As last year's hurricane season approached and the level of the water came within inches of the top of the dam, a member of the board notified the city and the DEC and the city notified FASNY. FASNY denied any danger and said there was no dam. Representatives of FASNY stated the "earthen berm" was no more than four feet high and publicly blamed the Gedney Association for creating an issue where there was none. (Structures identified as "dams" are subject to state safety regulations; "berms" are not).

Responding to the potential danger as Hurricane Irene approached, the City directed FASNY to make every effort to lower the level of the lake. FASNY used several small, temporary water pumps, running day and night, to reduce the level of the lake to avoid the dam being "overtopped" during the storm. Neighborhood observers of this effort report it was a close call.

Because of the quick actions of our neighbors, the Commissioner of Public Works and the DEC, the dam was not overtopped and a potential disaster was averted.

To our knowledge there is no permanent solution in place to reduce the water level or shore up the dam. FASNY cannot simply drain the lake completely (as they have publicly asserted). Governmental regulations prohibit the emptying of the lake; it acts as a water retention structure for the protection of properties to the south.

At the direction of the City and the DEC, FASNY has recently commenced some work in the wetlands area. We will continue to monitor the situation.

FASNY Application: the process of FASNY's application for a special permit continues. FASNY's response to the scoping document dictated by the NYS SEQR (environmental review) process was submitted to the city last week. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will be reviewed

by various departments of the city to determine if all of the information requested by the scoping document is included. This completeness review does not determine the merit or quality of the responses, only whether the responses are complete. The city's completeness review will likely take a month or more. Once the DEIS is deemed complete by the Common Council (as advised by staff), a public hearing will be scheduled. It is difficult to predict the timing of the public hearing. However, the comprehensive nature of the scoping document and the DEIS together with the city's long standing policy of not holding public hearings during the summer months, lead me to believe the hearing will likely be held in October or November. We will keep you informed.

We encourage you to forward this email to your friends and neighbors throughout White Plains. And, please visit our website gedneyfarms.net for more information.

Enjoy the spring weather!

-Terence

Terence Guerriere

President, Gedney Association