

To: cityclerk@whiteplainsny.gov
From: Ellen Alzerez, 424 Ridgeway
Re: FASNY Scoping Document
Date: 10/22/11

Life on Ridgeway and vicinity will be unbearable if FASNY's project is approved. Quality of life will vanish for residents as they endure years of dirty, noisy, disruptive construction -- by FASNY's calculation, seven (7) years in two phases. Post construction, increased traffic, air and noise pollution will continue to diminish quality of life. If FASNY is allowed to proceed, their PreK – 12 school, at full enrollment of 1,200 students, will be the largest private school system located at one site, in Westchester. This project will shatter Gedney Farms.

TRAFFIC

A major issue concerning this proposal is traffic. Ridgeway is a narrow, two-lane, no-passing road. It is one of the few east/west roads in the south end of White Plains. It has considerable traffic at peak hours. Residents have credible objections to and are rightly dismayed by FASNY's estimate of school-related vehicle traffic. They project that a **total** of 2,504 added trips will occur each school day during peak hours. The current average **daily** traffic figure for Ridgeway is 5,059 over 24 hours. If you live on Ridgeway, as I have for 40 years, or if you travel on Ridgeway during peak hours, you know that this street cannot support this increase in traffic in such a compressed time period. It is conceivable that FASNY traffic could bring from 50% to 100% more vehicles in peak hours. Ridgeway residents already have difficulty exiting their driveways during peak hours, a problem that FASNY traffic will exacerbate. FASNY says "we will do everything we can to minimize traffic impacts" (undated letter to Gedney Farms residents received on 10/20/11). What happens if despite all their best efforts, they cannot satisfactorily "minimize traffic impacts"? The answer is that Gedney Farms residents and others who drive on Ridgeway, will be forced to live with this failure. **This is unacceptable.**

Ridgeway has a past history of heavy traffic. It was once open all the way to Westchester Ave. until access was closed in the 1970's during the Del Vecchio administration, mitigating the problem. It will be an enormous setback to have traffic surpass these previously high and unmanageable levels. I understand that a traffic light will likely be installed at Hathaway Lane. Traffic will stack up, something FASNY claims it will avoid with a new wide and lengthy main entrance slightly west of the current Ridgeway entrance. It is not possible to predict this with 100% certainty. There will also be a second entrance, from Hathaway, for the Nursery and Lower School. Traffic will inevitably bleed onto side streets. In addition, the proposed new entrance on Ridgeway in the vicinity of Fairway Dr., is an unsafe location. There is a curve and a dip in the road in that general location. I believe that makes this spot unsafe. It is quite possible that the bulk of school-related traffic will approach from North St. In a worst case scenario,

traffic could back up from Hathaway to North St. ***Will the residents living on Ridgeway in the immediate vicinity of the school need a traffic cop to get out of their driveways?***

A second traffic issue is the negative effect of this large amount of additional traffic on the response time of emergency vehicles from the fire station on the corner of Ridgeway and North St. FASNY does not mention this issue in its calculations. They should be required to study the impact of their school traffic on the fire station and on ambulances.

OPEN SPACE

Development: Loss of open space in White Plains to development has been considerable. Proportionately, White Plains has less open space than does New York City. In the southern end of the city, from Bryant Ave. to Rosedale Ave., we have lost many acres of open space to development. These include:

- . Ridgeway at White Plains (The Boy Scout property off Topland - 23 acres)
- . Club Pointe (The Mulvey property off North St.)
- . The Greens at North St. (McGuinness Estate)
- . The Fairways on North St.
- . Cobblefield off Rosedale & an office building (Judge Irwin Levy Estate -100 acres)
- . Brook Hills on Rosedale (Emil Mosbacher Estate – 43 acres)
- . Wyndham Close off Bryant Ave. & North St.
- . Gedney Commons, Ridgeway & Mamaroneck Ave. (Cardinal McCloskey School - 17½ acres)

These are some of the larger developments. Even part of the Ridgeway Country Club off Bryant was sold for development, following which **the ring-necked pheasant habitat was destroyed and these birds disappeared**. I used to hear these beautiful birds all the time, and they would even fly into my back yard, which abuts the former golf course.

Once it is paved over, open space is gone forever. White Plains cannot afford to lose more open space. If we allow the last open spaces to be developed, we lose not only a vital asset, but we lose the character of our city and become an urban environment.

Gedney Preserve: FASNY claims that by creating the “Gedney Preserve” it will double the publicly available open space in White Plains. I do not know the current figure for open space. What I do know from FASNY’s application is that the proposed plan for the 129.69 acres allocates 45.88 acres for buildings, parking lots and athletic fields; 25.50 acres in the southern portion as protected wetlands areas and buffer; and the remaining 58.31 acres as the “Gedney Preserve.” The former Ridgeway Country Club utilized roughly six acres for buildings, swimming pool, parking lots and tennis courts. That means that about 123.69 acres, or **95%**, was open space. The “Gedney Preserve” comprises **45%** of the property. Whether public or private, FASNY’s development does not add open space. It subtracts open space.

ENVIRONMENT

Water: There are significant environmental concerns associated with the property FASNY purchased. These concerns cannot be overstated. They involve sensitive wetlands, drainage and flooding. This property is in the Mamaroneck River Watershed. There are streams and rivulets on this property that have been covered over. Flood control all the way to Long Island Sound is a continuing and growing problem. The Mayor of Mamaroneck has written to White Plains stating the Town's concerns with upstream development at Ridgeway. White Plains is part of LISWIC (Long Island Sound Watershed Intermunicipal Council). As such, it has a responsibility to prevent the exacerbation of drainage and flooding problems downstream.

Another water issue involves the lake visible from Hathaway Lane. FASNY is not maintaining it, allowing it to grow in size and be covered in algae. They should be required to aerate it, and keep the water at a manageable level. It also poses a possible danger downstream, as pressure on its earthen dam, which appears to be compromised, could cause serious damage should it be breached or overtopped. FASNY's attorney, Michael Zarin, calls this issue a "red herring" and complains that Gedney Farms residents are harassing FASNY. Mischa Zobotin, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, likens the neighborhood's concern to "imagining scenarios out of a disaster movie." These are very odd, petulant responses to a genuine concern of residents. A more appropriate response would be to do everything possible to establish the safety of this earthen dam to allay the residents' concerns. It was only at the insistence of the Public Works Dept. that the water level was lowered prior to Hurricane Irene. The water was about five inches from overtopping before the storm. However, in the general mailing to Gedney Farms residents mentioned above, FASNY takes credit for lowering the level, of course, never mentioning that they were **ordered** to do so.

Air Pollution: With the predicted large increase in traffic on Ridgeway, air pollution will rise. A once healthy environment will be degraded. What will be the long-term health risks for Ridgeway residents exposed to the rise in air pollution? How can we quantify this exposure? Is it right to expose residents to a sharp increase in auto and school bus emissions? My response is that it is both wrong and immoral to subject Ridgeway residents to these harmful emissions.

Noise Pollution: Both the additional traffic and the school itself will contribute to an increase in noise pollution. With 1,200 students and 10 athletic fields, air conditioners, other equipment and maintenance machinery, noise will be a very real factor. A peaceful neighborhood will be no more. In particular, the noise from the athletic fields and playgrounds will travel far and wide, as these venues will be spread over a large area. This will add to the other disruptions in quality of life. We already hear noise from outdoor activities at White Plains High School and from the Ridgeway Alliance Nursery School. The "Gedney Preserve" will be yet another source for noise. It is not a museum. People are loud. FASNY will be the tipping point for Gedney Farms.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT BASINS

A question that concerns me is how will FASNY maintain the stormwater management basins they plan to create? If it is anything like their maintenance of the lake and small pond on the former golf course, we are in trouble. Will the proposed stormwater management basins turn green with unsightly algae, as have these bodies of water? Will they, too, be breeding grounds for mosquitoes? With all the rain we had this summer, the mosquito population exploded. The condition of these two bodies of water contributed to this increase. RCC used to aerate the lake. FASNY does not. Stagnant water breeds mosquitoes. Will West Nile Virus become a problem here? RCC irrigated with lake water. FASNY does not irrigate at all, a point that they have made repeatedly and proudly. Consequently, the lake has grown larger, spilling over its banks.

Of the three planned stormwater management basins, two are on Ridgeway near the new entrance, and one is on Hathaway. Will the water in these basins have constant movement, with water flowing in and out? If not, will there be pesticide treatment to kill mosquito larvae? How will they prevent algae from forming? I read FASNY's "Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan", and did not see anything about preventing mosquitoes from breeding or preventing algae. **This must be addressed.**

Note: The site map included in this document, while correct for the former RCC property, is out of date by many years. It references the North St. School, now The German School; the Boy Scout Center, now developed with homes; the Cardinal McCloskey School now Gedney Commons; the Police Station on Church St., now relocated to S. Lexington Ave. It shows as open space other sites that have been developed, such as, Wyndham Close, etc. This is probably not relevant, but I thought I should bring it to your attention, because if there is a more current site map, with all locations noted correctly, it should have been used.

John Meyer Consulting, is the producer of the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Base Data & Design Criteria used for this plan for the Stormwater Management Analysis, includes the following (see page 4, Item #13): "The storm flows for 1, 10, 25, 50, & 100 year recurrence interval storms were analyzed for the total watershed areas. The Type III distribution design storm for a 24 hour duration was used and the mass rainfall for each design storm is as follows":

<u>Design Storm Recurrence Interval</u>	<u>Inches of Rainfall</u>
1 Year	2.8
10 Year	5.0
25 Year	6.0
50 Year	7.0
100 Year	7.5

This study was done before the unprecedented rainfall of the summer of 2011. We had over 7" of rain twice (one measurement was 7.7") within a one to two week period. This amount of rainfall is considered a 100-year occurrence, yet we had it twice this summer. Global warming studies are predicting more heavy rainfall events. The designs for the SWPPP should be reworked to factor in the possibility of repeated such 100-year occurrences, for this may become the new normal.

PARKING AND LIGHTING

With respect to the "Gedney Preserve," I did not see any provisions for parking by visitors in FASNY's plans, unless I overlooked it. Will they permit parking in their school parking lots? If not, we will be subjected to the haphazard parking of vehicles on the roadside throughout the neighborhood. I find this objectionable and potentially dangerous. They must be required to provide parking.

Another issue is the lights in the parking lots. FASNY made a large point of noting they would not put lights on the athletic fields, but I don't recall mention of the lights in the extensive parking lots. I know safety and security requires lighting. Current lighting is unobtrusive. However, the parking lots planned by FASNY are large and intrusive. Lights will not only affect the immediate neighbors, particularly Pat and Ellen Lee, whose house will be surrounded by parking lots, but the surrounding area as well. I would not want the parking lots to light up the night like a permanent carnival.

ATTITUDE

Most new developments are on their best behavior at the outset, and then slack off. FASNY has not even begun its development, and has to be ordered to do the required maintenance. Is this an early indication of what we can expect from them in the future? If so, this does not bode well for Gedney Farms and The City of White Plains.

There are more issues raised by FASNY's Scoping Document than I have covered. In my letter, I have addressed those issues which are not only important to me, but I believe are important to all of Gedney Farms. This location is not zoned for a school. This school is not only inappropriate for this location, but it is doubly inappropriate because it is both large scale and invasive. Because of the many negative impacts FASNY would have, as spelled out in my letter, the application for a Special Permit should be denied.

Sincerely,

Ellen Alzerez