



## WHITE PLAINS BOARD OF EDUCATION

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September 15, 2014

The Honorable Mayor Thomas Roach and  
Members of the White Plains Common Council  
City Hall  
255 Main Street  
White Plains, New York 10601

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The White Plains Board of Education (the "Board") wishes to convey to you the Board's opinion concerning certain aspects of the proposed relocation of the French American School of New York ("FASNY") to the site of the former Ridgeway Golf Course (the "Site") as well as certain safety concerns relating to our students districtwide.

We do this because:

1. White Plains High School and Ridgeway School are two of the largest neighbors of the proposed FASNY Site;
2. Our students, their families, our staff and the operations of the White Plains Schools would be significantly impacted by FASNY's operations at the Site; and
3. We possess the expertise and decades of practical, hands-on experience operating a school system in the City of White Plains and thus we are uniquely qualified to assess the associated safety, traffic and transportation issues.

For the reasons set forth below, it is the unanimous opinion of the White Plains Board of Education that (i) the increased traffic resulting from the location of the main entrance to the proposed consolidated French American School on either North Street or Bryant Avenue would have a profoundly negative and disruptive effect on the operations of White Plains High School and the safety and welfare of our students, their families and our staff, and (ii) the traffic mitigation proposals submitted by FASNY not only fail to remedy the flaws identified in their originally submitted plans, but certain suggested mitigation efforts potentially create much larger, more untenable problems for the White Plains Schools.

In preparation for this letter we convened a committee comprised of the Superintendent of Schools, the Assistant Superintendent for Business, the Principal of White Plains High School, the Director of Facilities, the Director of Transportation and Members of the Board of Education. The committee consulted with such other District employees, government officials, and others as we deemed necessary to provide an accurate and realistic appraisal of the issues presented.

We have limited the scope of our inquiry to those factors which impact the health, welfare and safety of the District's nearly 7,000 students and their families, our staff and the ability of the District to carry out its educational mission.

In pursuing this inquiry, we have reviewed (i) the Final Environmental Impact Statement and related schedules, exhibits and other documents submitted by FASNY, (ii) the presentations and documents presented by FASNY to the Board and the District's Administrators, (iii) the documents and materials made available by the City of White Plains and (iv) such other documents and materials the committee deemed relevant to the instant inquiry. We have also reviewed the initial and amended traffic studies submitted in conjunction with the FASNY proposals, as well as certain engineering and other analyses of these studies. We have also reviewed documentation concerning the frequency of car and bus accidents as well as pedestrian safety issues in and around our schools.

We note that early in the SEQRA review process, several significant flaws relating to traffic congestion and safety were identified in FASNY's initial proposals and, in an effort to address these flaws, certain modifications to the FASNY plan were made. Among these modifications were: (i) the relocation of the main entrance of the FASNY facility to North Street, directly across from the entrance to the White Plains High School, (ii) the staggering of FASNY school hours to minimize traffic congestion spikes during peak morning and afternoon school commutation hours, and (iii) a "mandatory" busing policy to further reduce automobile traffic during these peak commutation hours.

In this regard, and with due respect to the professionals who have provided their traffic projections, forecasts and models, the experienced professional staff of the White Plains Schools directly address and manage such very complex traffic issues each day in very real-world conditions. For example, in order to manage the District's bus transportation scheme, made more complex by our elementary school Parent Choice Program, the White Plains Public Schools not only stagger school hours among our nine school buildings but there already exist staggered hour arrangements with neighboring private schools. As such, we are acutely familiar with the true efficacy of such arrangements.

It has also been our experience that there are undesirable, unexpected consequences from FASNY's proposed "mandatory" busing policy. Even under the best of weather conditions, such programs are difficult to enforce and, over time, compliance fades. In order to maintain such a policy, a full complement of buses must be run daily despite the inevitable drop in ridership. Thus, this policy is likely to result in the unintended and counterproductive consequence of both a high number of partially-filled buses in addition to many more cars than projected. Under inclement weather conditions such a program would be even less effective and the disruptive effects on traffic conditions would be significantly exacerbated and could be devastating to White Plains School operations. This could be particularly hazardous in the event of an emergency condition requiring the evacuation of one or more schools.

Lastly, neither simulations nor projections can more accurately predict future traffic conditions than our staff members who, for several decades, have managed the complex day-to-day traffic situations in and around our schools and the associated and critical safety issues.

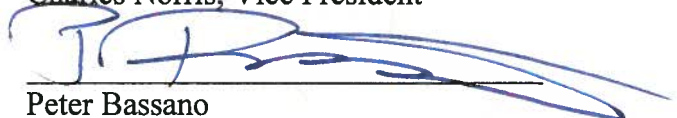
In light of the foregoing, and based upon our expert staff's decades of school traffic management experience in the City of White Plains generally and in the North Street vicinity specifically, it is the opinion of the White Plains School Board that (i) the traffic congestion which will be caused by the location of the main entrance to FASNY on North Street or on Bryant Avenue, would have a profoundly negative and disruptive effect on the operations of White Plains High School and the safety and welfare of our students, their families and our staff, and (ii) FASNY's traffic mitigation proposals not only fail to remedy the flaws in their plans, certain suggested mitigation efforts create much larger, more untenable problems for the White Plains Schools.

We note that the FASNY proposal includes student pathways across their grounds that could be accessible to White Plains students and would provide a safer means of walking or bike riding to school than the currently configured streets. We share with the City of White Plains the responsibility to ensure the safe travel for pedestrians in school zones throughout the City. In this regard, we urge the City of White Plains and, as appropriate, the County of Westchester, to evaluate and implement the sidewalk and street improvements and staffing urged by the Walk/Bike Safety Committee of the White Plains PTA Council. Such recommendations recently delivered to Mayor Roach and the Common Council and are supported by the Board of Education and we welcome the opportunity to continue our work together for the safety and wellbeing of our students.


Sincerely,  
The White Plains Board of Education


  
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Rosemarie Eller, President

  
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Charles Norris, Vice President

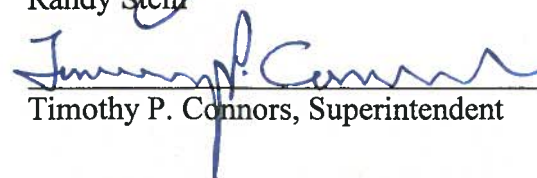
  
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Timothy P. Connors, Superintendent