

State Pushing Mental Hospital

The state administration is still actively considering construction of a 3,000-bed mental hospital in the South Beach-Midland Beach area, it was disclosed yesterday.

The project, one of three planned for the city, was first brought to light a year ago when an auction of city-owned real estate on the Island was halted temporarily so that some parcels in the beach area could be withdrawn from the sale. It was said that the parcels were in an area being considered by the state for such a hospital.

Borough President Maniscalco, who had not been advised of the plan, ordered the sale resumed, however, refusing to give any blanket approval to such a plan until the state showed him what it proposed for the area.

Yesterday state officials met with Maniscalco and other city officials in Borough Hall and later looked over several areas on the South Shore which they said were being considered as possible sites for such a project.

Maniscalco reported later that he officials showed a strong preference for a site in an area between Hylan boulevard and the beachfront, somewhere between South Beach and Midland Beach. They indicated, he said, that an area of from 80 to 100 acres would be needed for the project.

THE BOROUGH president laid down for the officials a number of requirements he would insist upon before even considering the plan, he said, and they agreed to give them full consideration before taking any further steps.

The borough president's requests included: The buildings

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project itself.

Boundaries of the site be drawn to exclude as many houses as possible; if any serious relocation problems arise for existing occupants of the site, that the state assist in the relocation program.

The state assume full cost of the improvement of streets which would border the project, so that no assessment would be levied on adjoining property, and that no plans for the project be advanced without the state first giving his office full opportunity to study them and make recommendations.

Maniscalco said he made it clear to the officials that he would take no stand on the proposal until the state agreed to his demands.

THE OFFICIALS said that no estimate of cost could be made until a site was definitely selected and preliminary plans prepared.

They indicated, Maniscalco said, that test borings would be made on two or three possible island sites within the next few months.

The officials also indicated, the borough president reported, that the state, under its right of eminent domain, could take property for a site if deems it necessary, despite any objections by Maniscalco on the city itself.

"These officials, however, have promised to cooperate fully," he said. "They seemed very eager to please and assured us that we will be kept fully advised. We have not endorsed this proposal and will not take any stand until we have a look at what is being contemplated."

The state officials who visited the Island yesterday included Dr. Richard F. Binzley, assistant commissioner of the Department of Mental Hygiene; W. A. Clifton, the department's consulting engineer; Carl W. Larson, state architect; John J. Farrell, general superintendent of construction in the state architect's office; John Tiesler, chief of planning in the office of the state budget director, and Russell Iadsen, architect in charge of the planning bureau of the office of the state budget director.

City officials who participated in the tour and discussions, included Stuart Constable, executive officer of the Park Department; Arthur Hodgkiss, representing the city construction coordinator's office; Robert McCullough, chief engineer of the Board of Estimate; Adolph Klein, administrator of the City Planning Commission, and engineers and top officials of the borough president's staff.

State Hospital Pattern Drawn

The state is getting ready to plunk a 3,000-bed mental hospital on Staten Island.

But we see much more reason for satisfaction than for consternation.

Technically, the state could move right in, plan and erect an institution and pay no attention to views expressed by Staten Island or the city. The state has the right of eminent domain.

The proposal, though, is being handled delicately and diplomatically by the state. The borough is being consulted, and the borough president is stating necessary restrictions forthrightly.

THERE IS no reason to oppose a state mental hospital as such . . . as long as it is constructed so as to be compatible with its environment and is properly administered.

Judging by the State Mental Hygiene Department's operation at Willowbrook, fears concerning the administration may safely subside.

As for the construction of the buildings, Borough President Maniscalco is wisely asking that certain requirements be met.

Mr. Maniscalco insists—and we doubt if any Islander will disagree with him—that the height of the buildings must be limited, that the area be as open as possible and adequately landscaped and that the site be chosen so as to affect few, if any, private homes.

These requirements are certainly reasonable. It is to the state's own benefit that they be followed.

THE EXACT SITE has not been determined and may not be for several months at least.

The state's expressed interest in city-owned land, though, strongly suggests a site in the South Beach-Midland Beach sector.

This particular property appears to have little appeal for residential development and, therefore, gains value for state development.

Generally speaking, the Island would profit from the use of this land for a state hospital and in the thousands of job opportunities that would be opened up.

Staten Island isn't asking that it be chosen as a site for a much-needed hospital, but we're gratified that our chief elected official is insisting on protective "rules and regulations."