

Mental Hygiene Facilities Stymied by Lack of Cash

By FRED E. WEISS

That old excuse, "there just isn't enough money," is echoing through the areas on Staten Island earmarked by the state for mental hygiene facilities.

Assemblyman Lucio F. Russo said today that the state Department of Mental Hygiene will not be able to move along as scheduled in constructing three major projects on Staten Island.

The big proposed mental hospital in the South Beach-Ocean Breeze area, Russo has been told, is still "years away from

being a reality" because there is no money in the 1964 capital budget for the \$30 million project.

A million dollars more is needed to build an institute for research adjacent to Willowbrook State School, Russo learned. And that million dollars is not readily available since the state is planning to chop its expenditures.

And it will not be until next spring, or later, that initial steps will be taken for a \$1.5-million building project on the grounds of Willowbrook State School, Russo, who questioned Com-

missioner Paul H. Hoch of the Mental Hygiene agency, said the South Beach mental hospital is "year away."

The money for the construction of two-story dining halls, classrooms and alterations on present structures at Willowbrook State School has been appropriated. Plans are being drawn and bids are expected to be opened some time next spring.

But Dr. Hoch told Russo that not all of the plans his department has for Staten Island are running as smoothly.

THE 200-ACRE mental hospital site, which is little more than a barren wasteland now, originally was to be a 3,000-bed mental hospital. Later, the plan was changed and under present plans the hospital will be for 400 to 1,500 mentally retarded children and adults, and between 800 and 1,000 mentally ill persons.

The contract to fill the swamp land on the site is expected to be let in the fall. But that is as far as the planning has gone.

Some property claims are still in the courts, Russo learned, and the state and the city are still negotiating for city-owned land and for the construction of storm and sanitary

sewers around the site.

During last session of the state Legislature, Russo said, the lawmakers established a Facilities Improvement Fund. This fund would permit the Department of Mental Hygiene to issue bonds and borrow money.

However, the 1964 capital budget does not include money for the construction of the mental hospital and all that has been set aside for the Department of Mental Hygiene is money for the acquisition of land.

SMALLERLY, the research institute near Willowbrook is a long way from becoming a reality since, Russo learned, the con-

struction has been delayed because it is now estimated that it will cost the state \$1 million more to build the center.

The project was to cost \$7.5 million, with the federal government providing \$2 million. The state agency reported to Russo that either "a million dollars more would have to be appropriated by the state or the cost would be cut."

Final plans for the research institute are being completed since the original \$5.5 million request was appropriated last year. Since the appropriation, however, it was discovered that the cost of construction would be \$6.5 mil-