

Board members cool to study on Developmental Center

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firm, he repeatedly told board members that the findings simply represented the results of the "data collection" phase and that the firm is far from recommending what should be done with the land.

His remarks, however, did little to allay fears that the feasibility study would result in marketing the land for development.

One board member, Rea Stein, found it "disturbing" that the initial report "moved right into a market study." "You talk about growth, but what was not included (in the presentation) was an overview of the effects of growth and what might be needed in the future, like a cultural center," she said.

In brief reports, seven consultants discussed the geology and ecology of the site, its vegetation and landscape, the potential for rehabilitating buildings on the land, surrounding traffic and its accessibility, air quality and the marketability of the site.

Although Elliot said the presentation was given to allow board members a chance to comment on the focus and direction of the study, Joseph Pinnola, a board member, said it was "unfair" to expect the board to make recommendations "when we have only a verbal report and a limited number of facts. We want a copy and a timetable," Pinnola demanded.

"This is a start," the attorney responded, "these studies have a tendency to get rolling and pick up speed, so we wanted to let you get in it right away. But you will have other opportunities to comment on the study," Elliot added.

"We have come to you at this stage to give you an idea of the data base we will work with," said Richard Thomas, program manager of the state Office of General Services. State officials will continue to keep the board "aware of the progress so we can go down the road jointly," Thomas said.

Commenting on the site's proximity to the Greenbelt, Thomas said state officials were "aware of the sensitivity" of the issue.

While acknowledging that the report was "of an interim nature," Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly was "bothered by the report's presumptuousness."

"Environmentally, the report was fine," Mrs. Connelly said, "but as for the future of (the rest) of the property, the premise of the report was that the land would be marketed. In fact, the report focused so heavily on the marketability of the developed areas, that I fear other alternatives will be ignored."

Pointing out that the College of Staten Island is considering consolidating the St. George and Sunnyside campuses and that there are community groups and government agencies in need of office space, Mrs. Connelly added, "these ideas weren't addressed because they have no market value."

The assemblywoman, who reviewed the study last week, concluded in a written statement, "I'm not convinced that we're not in the middle of a whitewash."

Elliot told the board that a draft of the "data collection" findings would be submitted for it in early March.

In other business, the board:

☐ Voted unanimously to approve a request for a variance for conversion of a barn with a hayloft and attached carport at 325 Ocean Terr., Todt Hill, to a one-family dwelling with a carport.

☐ Voted to deny a request by the owner of an establishment at 2516 Hylan Blvd., New Dorp, for a special permit to operate a video-game amusement arcade.

☐ Voted to conduct a special meeting Monday night in Sea View Hospital and Home following a public hearing on a proposed state-run group home for 10 profoundly retarded young adults to be constructed on a lot at St. George Rd. and Aultman Ave., Richmond. The board will vote on the proposal after the mandated hearing.