

Connelly wants task force to study Willowbrook site

In response to a consulting firm's interim report on the disposition of land at the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook, Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly today called for immediate creation of a special task force to evaluate the property's fate.

The consultant, Gruen Associates, unveiled preliminary data and findings last week at a meeting of Community Board 2. Many board members felt the study focused too heavily on selling off the state-owned land for development purposes at the expense of possible public use.

In a letter to Commissioner John Egan of the state's Office of General Services, Mrs. Connelly, urging Egan to convene the proposed task force, said the land and buildings at the center are "a prime resource."

Because their future "is of great concern to Staten Islanders," the West Brighton Democrat continued, "the time is right" to establish the task force.

It is Egan's office that hired Gruen Associates to coordinate a study of the Willowbrook property. In addition to the community board, Mrs. Connelly said progress reports on the first phase of the study have been made to her, State Sen. John J. Marchi and Dr. Ella Curry, the center's director.

She said the task force would evaluate Gruen's data and make recommendations of its own.

In her letter to the commissioner, Mrs. Connelly suggested

that the task force consist of representatives of:

- ☐ Borough President Gaeta.
- ☐ The Staten Island office of the City Planning Department.
- ☐ The borough's three community boards.
- ☐ City and state park agencies.
- ☐ The Staten Island Regional Retardation and Disabilities Council.
- ☐ Protectors of Pine Oak Woods.
- ☐ The Staten Island Chamber of Commerce.
- ☐ The Office of General Services and the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

☐ The developmental center's director.

Mrs. Connelly, whose office is

in the center's administration building, noted that at the community board session members expressed concern that Staten Island would be denied a real voice in deciding the future of the center's 382 acres and dozens of buildings.

"Many people have an interest in the future of Willowbrook," she said. "The state has made a big investment in a valuable piece of property. But we have to remember, we are the state and if (the state) divests itself of the property and retreats to Albany, the community has to live with whatever remains."

"I intend to make sure," Mrs. Connelly added, "that the task force represents the legitimate interests of the residents of Staten Island."