

SIDC use as CSI campus nixed

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An ad hoc task force consisting mostly of Community Board 2 members, meeting last night in the board's Sea View Hospital and Home offices, passed a resolution opposing the proposed transfer of the College of Staten Island to the grounds of Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC), Willowbrook.

The seven members of the task force present at the meeting unanimously passed the five-point resolution, which also recommended the center's undeveloped grounds be turned over to the city Parks Department. The task force was created to study possible uses for the developmental center, which is scheduled to close in 1987.

"We want it (SIDC) to remain in public control under the city Parks (Department) because Willowbrook Park is adjacent," Edmund Murphy, chairman of Board 2 and a member of the task force, said. "With the upturn in the economy, the city has the money to maintain and develop the land."

Terence Benbow, representing the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, spoke in favor of using the SIDC grounds for a new CSI campus.

"The relatively sudden availability of the property, which has sufficient space close to the highway, and its central location on the Island are good reasons to put it there," Benbow said of his group's support for moving CSI to the Willowbrook site.

In recent months, many people, including Sen. John J. Marchi, have proposed the 382-acre SIDC grounds as a possible site for the combined Sunnyside and St. George campuses of CSI. The plans called for the extensive renovation and expansion of the buildings already standing on the grounds.

The state Office of General Services is in charge of selling or redeveloping the SIDC site, but the final decision rests with Gov. Mario M. Cuomo, who has pledged to consider the recommendations of the 13-member task force.

Benbow also emphasized that the state already owns the SIDC site and its transfer to the college would make it easier for the

state to continue its involvement in funding the school along with the city.

"This being a state site to begin with, makes it much more likely it (the school) will be treated like other state universities," Benbow said.

He also felt that CSI's large environmental studies program was well-suited to the Willowbrook site that the Protectors hope to preserve as part of the Greenbelt.

However, the task force members made clear they not only opposed the SIDC site for CSI, but continue to believe their original proposal to place the school in an all-new complex in Ocean Breeze, was the best solution for the future growth of the college.

"The board wants the combined campus adjacent to the Staten Island Hospital," Murphy said. "We're looking down the long road when the school might expand to have a full medical program."

Benbow took issue with the Ocean Breeze proposal, saying that the board's view of CSI's

future expansion was "only a projection. There is no medical program in the college, only medically related programs like nursing and medical technologies."

He added that he understood the state has already said it would cost \$30 million to prepare the Ocean Breeze site for a combined campus, even before new buildings were constructed. But the task force contested the validity of the \$30 million figure.

The resolution's other points called for:

- Public areas at the site to be developed with an Olympic-type facility consisting of pools, a gymnasium and track with access for the handicapped.

- Exploring the possibility of utilizing some existing buildings for Staten Island community theater groups.

- Holding the remaining buildings as a "building bank" for future use.

Murphy also said he was "at a loss to understand the immediacy of disposing of the property.

"It's public land and we're the public," he said.

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