

Council fears state

will jump gun on SIDC

By JULIE MACK
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Staten Island advocates for the mentally retarded say they fear the state is reneging on its pledge to involve the community in the disposition of the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) property.

"We've heard no word whatsoever" on the disposition process, Harry Friedland, chairman of the Staten Island Regional Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Council, told the Advance Editorial Board in a meeting earlier this week. "All we want to know is what is going on."

The concern centers on the discontinuance of monthly meetings of a task force which has not convened since July. The task force was created in April by Gov. Mario M. Cuomo to obtain recommendations from Island representatives on the future of the Willowbrook prop-

erty.

The institution is scheduled to close in 1987, and the state plans to redevelop almost 300 acres of the 382-acre campus.

The task force was originally scheduled to have a draft proposal written by September and a final report finished this month. But the task force still has not even reviewed the proposals for the property, which were collected this summer by the state Office of General Ser-

vices (OGS).

Arthur Webb, commissioner of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), who chairs the task force with OGS Commissioner John Egan, told the Advance last week that OGS is still awaiting a proposal from the College of Staten Island before presenting the plans to the task force.

CSI has expressed interest in consolidating its campus on the

Willowbrook property, a concept Webb said he supports.

But Webb's recent endorsement of the CSI proposal angered Friedland, whose group has submitted its own 10-page plan for the property. "What Webb said came as a complete surprise to us," Friedland said. "I think it's a conflict of interest, or at least inappropriate for him to make that sort of comment at this time."

The council members hinted

that Webb's statement suggests state officials are moving ahead on plans for SIDC without consulting the task force.

"I think the state wants everyone to believe the delay (in reconvening the task force) was because of the election," said Genevieve Benoit, a member of the council and one of 11 Islanders on the task force. "But I think what's really happening is