

that the state is deciding what it wants to do with the property."

"I can't accept the fact that the state is still working on the proposals without getting input from the task force," Friedland said. "We feel we have the right to say something about what happens. When people start making comments that might be committing the state to a certain purpose for that land ... well, we have the right to have some dialogue."

"We don't object to the college" moving to Willowbrook, said Diane Buglioli, vice chairwoman of the retardation council. "But we want the state to show us why we don't need the 300 acres for the handicapped."

The council's plan recommends a 200-bed complex to serve as transitional housing for handicapped people awaiting placement in community residences; a 60-acre camp, and a 125-acre recreational complex to include ball fields, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, tennis courts, running tracks, a theater and a meeting hall for public use, with priority given to the handicapped.

The residential complex is especially needed because of the shortage of housing for the handicapped, the council members said.

"There is nothing available in our community," Friedland said. "People are going outside the borough to place their children."

Although it has not adopted the council's plan, Webb's agency plans to build a 72-bed residential complex at Corson's Brook Woods, a 40-acre woodland tract on the SIDC property. But construction of the homes has been halted by a temporary court order obtained by environmentalists who say the site should remain a natural preserve. The case is still pending in Supreme Court.

Council members, who support the state's group home proposal, said that the Corson's Woods controversy has been exacerbated by the delay in reconvening the task force. In the absence of a forum where community representatives can negotiate their interests, council members said, there has evolved a pitched battle that has stalemated immediate plans to build group homes, which are desperately needed.

"We find ourselves being pushed into January and nothing has happened," Ms. Buglioli said. "We have 100 Islanders who need housing right now. But nothing is happening."

"It's a Mexican standoff," said Friedland. "We don't enjoy it. We don't want it. We want to close the gap created by inactivity by the task force."

"We are not opposing anyone, but we have the right to have dialogue."

"The clock is moving along, but we're standing still," Ms. Buglioli said.

*(The Advance Editorial Board for this meeting included Les Trautmann, editor; William Huus, associate editor; Mark Hanley, editorial page editor; Mark Davis, editorial writer; Martha Bendix, copy editor, and Julie Mack, copy editor/reporter.)*