

Task force schedules Willowbrook hearing

By JULIE MACK
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Hoping to gauge community sentiment before making its recommendation, a task force on the disposition of the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) property in Willowbrook has scheduled a public hearing for Feb. 7.

The hearing will allow Islanders to give their opinions on several proposals for the property, including a controversial plan to create a new, consolidated campus for College of Staten Island.

The task force, which consists of four top state officials and nine Islanders has not endorsed

any of the proposals yet. The group reviewed the college plan for the first time in a meeting yesterday at SIDC.

Although almost a dozen concepts for redeveloping the site are under consideration, the CSI plan has been viewed by participants as the most significant request, in terms of the amount of property involved and the support the plan has received from state officials.

The CSI proposal already has the informal backing of the state Budget Division; the commissioner for state services for the mentally retarded, Arthur Webb,

who co-chairs the task force, and the staff of Office of General Services Commissioner John Egan, the other co-chair.

The budget department has encouraged the college to pursue its request for the Willowbrook property, according to CSI officials. Webb voiced his support for the college proposal in an Advance Editorial Board meeting last month.

While Egan has not publicly aired his views on any of the proposals, he suspended the task force's monthly meetings last July while waiting for the col-

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General Services Commissioner John Egan speaks to the group assembled at the Staten Island Developmental Center to review the plan for CSI's consolidated campus.

Task force

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lege to submit its request. Moreover, Raymond Koloski, OGS real property task force coordinator, said yesterday he is certain that the college plan will be included in the recommendations the task force submits to Gov. Mario Cuomo.

"It fits so well," Koloski said, noting that the college can use many of the facilities being vacated by the SIDC. The main purpose of yesterday's meeting was informa-

tional: The task force heard the results of a consultants' study for the City University of New York, which concluded that Willowbrook was the best site for a consolidated CSI campus.

The study recommended that the college, which now operates campuses in St. George and Sunnyside, request 187 of the 300 acres being vacated at Willowbrook.

While most people at the meeting asked questions rather than expressed opinions, repre-

sentatives from Community Board 2 took the occasion to voice their opposition to the college request.

"I want a second opinion on these charts," said Community Board 2 Chairman Edmund Murphy, gesturing at the charts used in the CSI presentation.

Murphy and Philip Scampas, chairman of the Community Board 2 land use committee and a member of the task force, argued that CSI should stick with its original plan to relocate to a

110-acre site adjacent to Staten Island Hospital in Ocean Breeze. While the consultant's report acknowledged that the Ocean Breeze site is acceptable for a new campus, it said the Willowbrook property can be developed for less money and that the site is more attractive.

Scampas and Murphy said the Ocean Breeze site is far more accessible for both students who drive and those who use mass transit, and that the college could build better medical programs by locating next to the hospital.

"We studied the Ocean Breeze site; we've fought for the Ocean Breeze site," Scampas said. "Now we've got the Ocean Breeze site and he (CSI President Edmond Volpe) changes his mind. What's going to happen in another five years?"

In addition, the Community Board 2 representatives protested the lack of community input in the consultant's study.

Murphy asked Volpe to delay a vote by the City University board of trustees on the issue. The CUNY board is meeting Monday and is expected to authorize university officials to begin negotiations for the Willowbrook property. Murphy argued that the CUNY board should wait until after the public hearing before pursuing the matter further, but Volpe said he does not have the authority to delay the vote.



Edmund J. Murphy, chairman of Community Board 2, scratches his chin while CSI President Edmond Volpe responds to questions by Philip Scampas. S.I. Advance Photos by Tony Dugal

Area 2

In contrast with the Community Board 2 representatives, other task force members seemed more concerned with coordinating the college request with other proposals for the property. Other major proposals include requests by environmentalists to preserve the woodlands and by Island advocates for the handicapped who want a 200-bed residential complex and a 125-acre recreational complex for their constituency.

Other suggestions came from:

- Young Israel of Staten Island, for 16 acres to build senior citizen housing, a group home for the mentally retarded and neighborhood park.

- The Staten Island Council for Animal Welfare, for a building to house stray animals.

- The Jewish Foundation School, for a building for its operation.

- The regional Little League association, which would like to establish its headquarters at Willowbrook.

- Staten Island Civic Theater, for a building to convert into a theater.

- The SIDC employees union, which would like to convert five buildings into a state-operated

residential facility for the mentally retarded.

- Imagine A Better Way, a non-profit agency which wants to establish a program for developmentally disabled adults.

"I'm not going to be a Pollyanna and say that everything on the table can be included in the property," Egan said. "But I think most are manageable."

He said the actual acreage requested by CSI is "not set in granite," and suggested that there will be room to accommodate at least several interests.

He suggested that the task

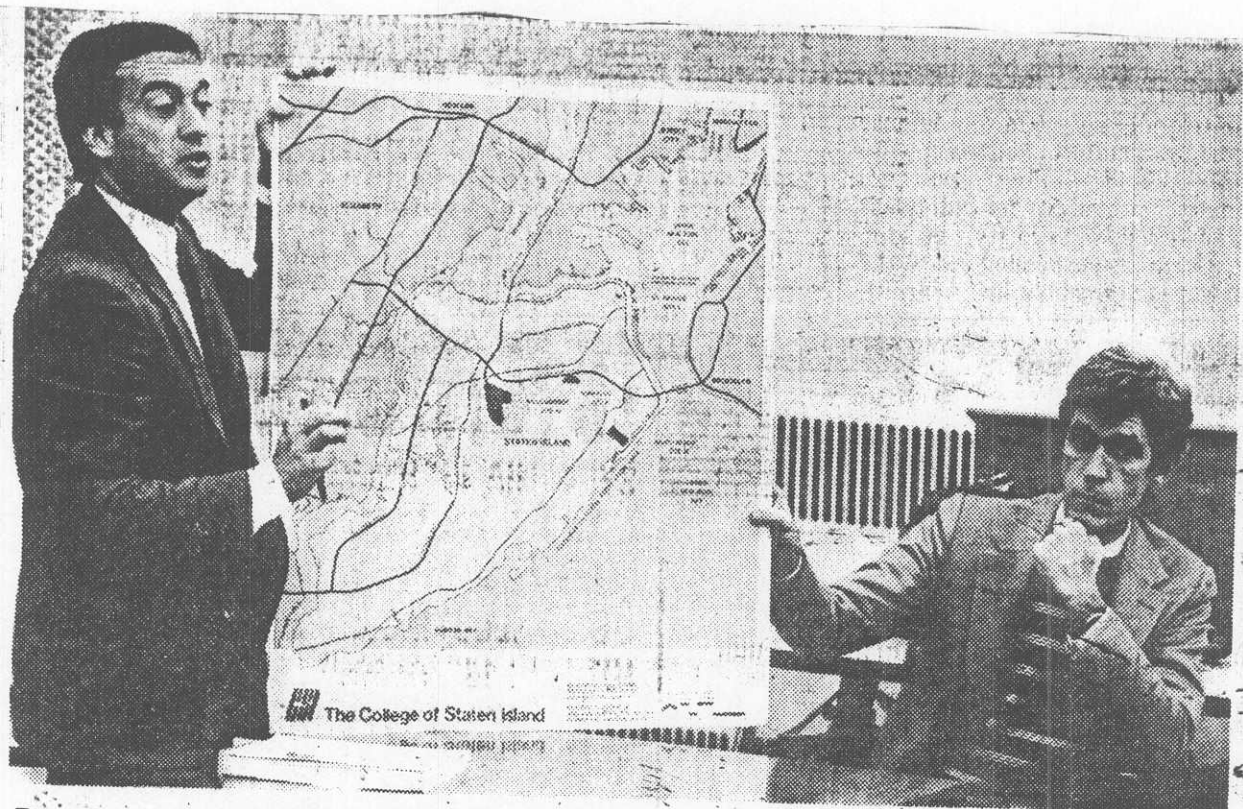
force meet soon after the public hearing to form its recommendations.

Egan scheduled the public hearing for 7 p.m. The location will be announced next week.

Another public hearing on the unified campus, conducted by Community Board 2, will be held Feb. 13 at 7:30 p.m. at Sea View Hospital and Home. The board is inviting Islanders to voice their opinion whether the college should be located in Ocean Breeze or Willowbrook, although Community Board approval is not necessary for the move.



Volpe refers to the study on CSI's location.



Peter Capone explains why he recommends the Willowbrook site for the College of Staten Island campus as J. Michael Kinlan, colleague from the architectural consulting firm of Edward Durell Stone Associates, holds map.

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