

BP: No hidden Ocean Breeze plan

By JIM BUELL
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Borough President Ralph Lamberti assured members of the Ocean Breeze Civic Association yesterday that no hidden agenda exists for a state-owned property in their neighborhood.

"I can assure you that any government-owned property will not be developed without public input," he told four members of the civic group at a meeting in Borough Hall. "Everybody will have an opportunity to comment."

At issue is a tract behind South Beach Psychiatric Center and Staten Island Hospital which the College of Staten Island began considering several years ago as a site for a combined campus. The land, a 110-acre tract condemned by the state nearly 20 years ago for public use, is owned by the state Dormitory Authority.

With the college's decision to press for combining its current St. George and Sunnyside campuses at the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook, civic association members fear the Ocean Breeze land will be up for grabs. They hope to convince the college to again consider going to Ocean Breeze.

The land will be the subject of a public meeting next Wednesday at 8 p.m., sponsored by the Ocean Breeze group and several other organizations calling

themselves the Coalition of Civic Associations. It will also be discussed at a separate public hearing Monday night called by Community Board 2.

But Lamberti argued that public hearings of any sort are premature. "I don't know why there's a public hearing yet," he said. "There is no application to take action on. In order for that to happen, the state would have to transfer the land to the city."

According to Arthur Careccia, president of Ocean Breeze Civic Association, one reason for yesterday's meeting was to explore rumors that the site may eventually be used for low-income housing. Lamberti said such rumors have no basis, although he noted that a CSI consultant has recommended that the land be sold for \$20 million to developers for high-rise condominiums.

"I do not support condominiums there, and I do not support housing there at all," Lamberti

said. Repeating a suggestion he made at last month's Borough Board meeting, he said he would like to see the land used for recreation, possibly including an Olympic-size swimming pool and a running track.

"I don't even think you have to be concerned about low-income housing because the land is too valuable," he added.

The borough president also said he was an early and vocal supporter of the college's proposal to consolidate at Ocean Breeze. But, he said, state budget officials shelved the plan after determining that relocating there would prove too expensive.

It now appears that the college will succeed in gaining state funds for moving to Willowbrook, he said, in part because of the CSI consultant's determination that constructing new buildings and adapting existing ones at Willowbrook would be about \$70 million cheaper than building anew at Ocean Breeze.

"There's nothing I would do to jeopardize funding for education for our youth," he said, explaining why he now supports the college's proposal to move to Willowbrook.

Still, Lamberti said, he refuses to be "locked in" to any site. "I want to see all the proposals," he said. "If I take a position, I'm locked in. My support of the Willowbrook site is contingent on a lot of other things," including assurances that other groups seeking portions of the developmental center's land for pro-