

# BP: No hidden Ocean Breeze plan

By JIM BUELL

Advance Staff Writer

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-

grams for the handicapped will be served.

Jackie Cowan, vice president of the civic association, raised questions about the sale of 18 acres of the Ocean Breeze land to Staten Island Hospital last year for 62 cents a square foot. The state paid more than 80 cents a square foot for the property in the 1960s, she said, and it should be worth as much as \$10 to \$12 a foot now.

Lamberti responded that, as a member of the hospital's board of directors, he was instrumental in negotiating that sale. "This is a not-for-profit facility whose purpose is to aid the community," he said.

Lamberti also revealed that he and the hospital's executive director, Barry T. Zeman, have discussed the possibility of acquiring more property there for the hospital to use as a "land bank" in the event of future development.

While the hospital continues to support establishing the combined campus at Ocean Breeze, Lamberti said, "if that does not occur, if there is already a decision to go to Willowbrook, he

(Zeman) wants as much property as possible for a land bank."

Hospital spokesman Michael Cala confirmed yesterday that Lamberti and Zeman had spoken about the matter, and said Zeman envisions leaving the land undeveloped for 20 years or longer in the event it may be useful "to meet contingencies in the short- and long-term needs of the community."

Civic association members left the meeting still insistent that the college should be made to reconsider the Ocean Breeze property, but indicating they were satisfied with Lamberti's responses and approach to the issue.

"I thought he was honest, that he doesn't pull punches," Careccia said, "but I still think the college can and should go there. If it doesn't at least we will have put up a good fight."

Also representing the civic group at the meeting were John Cappotosto and Eileen Barbley, the organization's secretary. Joining Lamberti were Borough Hall assistants Robert Connelly, Thomas Lamanna and Aldo Benedetto.

---

*Page 2*