

CSI move to Ocean Breeze gets support of civic leaders

By JIM BUELL
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A dozen civic association leaders and community residents voiced support last night for consolidating the College of Staten Island (CSI) at Ocean Breeze, during an hour-long public hearing in the Sea View Hospital and Home auditorium.

The hearing, sponsored by a Community Board 2 committee, is the first of two this week called by people who support moving the college to a 110-acre site acquired by the State Derritory Authority in 1972. The site was condemned by the state more than two decades ago as part of the construction site for South Beach Psychiatric Center, but the 110 acres were not used.

The Ocean Breeze proponents hope to convince college officials to rethink their decision to relocate at the soon-to-be-vacated Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) in Willowbrook.

Board 2 Chairman Edmund Murphy termed last night's meeting a success, saying: "We

heard whether people wanted SIDC or Ocean Breeze, and they gave justification for their reasons. I think the public officials' minds are still open." No speaker supported consolidating the college at the developmental center.

"If the college is not built at Ocean Breeze, I feel the state did an injustice to the community," Arthur Careccia, president of the Ocean Breeze Civic Association, told Board 2's Committee for a Unified College of Staten Island Campus.

"An injury would be done to all South Beach residents who lost their land 25 years ago," Richard Grant, president of the Mid-Grant Civic Association, said in agreement.

And as the 40 civic group leaders and community board members who attended the session learned, they are not alone in advocating a move to Ocean Breeze.

"Staten Island Hospital supports the move of CSI to the hospital site," Robert Erland, a hospital executive and community board member, said. Mov-

ing to the Ocean Breeze tract, which adjoins the hospital along Seaview Avenue, would permit the college and the hospital to expand their cooperative dental, medical and nursing programs, Erland said.

"However," he added, "the hospital, of course, would ultimately support whatever decision is best for the Staten Island community."

Also seen as advantages for the college at Ocean Breeze site were easier access for students who drive, more open land to build upon and, as Richard Back of the Gateway-New Dorp Civic Association put it, "At Ocean Breeze you can build for the future" rather than adapt the existing buildings at Willowbrook.

Several speakers, including Murphy, disputed a CSI consultant's finding that constructing at Willowbrook would cost some \$60 million less than at Ocean Breeze.

"It's time to stop the almighty dollar from dictating" the choice of a site, Derek Lopes of the Graham Beach Civic Association

said.

Also disputed were concerns raised by the college about flooding at Ocean Breeze, which originally was swamp land before being filled in with sand. Several speakers argued that the land on which the hospital and South Beach Psychiatric Center were built is identical to that underlying the proposed college site.

Other speakers supported Ocean Breeze because they fear that a college at Willowbrook would take away too much space from recreational users. Among them were several members of the Staten Island Horsemen's Association, who argued that the developmental center land should be used for outdoor activities.

The property will be the subject of another public meeting tomorrow at 8 p.m. in Building 1 of the South Beach Psychiatric Center. That session is sponsored by the Coalition of Civic Associations, most of whose member groups were represented last night.