

Ocean Breeze CSI site backed

By REGINALD PATRICK
The Coalition of Civic Associations yesterday voiced strong support for consolidating the College of Staten Island (CSI) on a 110-acre plot in Ocean Breeze adjacent to the South Beach Psychiatric Center.

At the same time the coalition, which met at the center, questioned a recent report that locating the college on the Ocean Breeze land would be economically unfeasible because of unstable soil conditions in the area.

CSI officials favor an alternative consolidation plan — unifying the college campuses on 185-acre tract that is now the grounds of the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook. That plan would require renovating existing structures at the developmental center as opposed to all-new construction that would be required at the Ocean Breeze site.

Earlier in the week an architect for the college, who has studied the problem for 13 years, said building at the Ocean Breeze site would require a multi-million dollar foundation to support structures on the sandy soil substrate. In addition,

he said, buildings would be vulnerable to flooding and storms.

Coalition representatives termed the architect's findings a "smokescreen... and a cop-out."

"Why did it take 13 years to find out the land is unsuitable?" Arthur Careccia, president of the Ocean Breeze Civic Association, asked.

Coalition official Philip Scampas, who chairs Community Board 2's land use committee, discounted any potential flooding problems, noting that the adjacent South Beach Psychiatric Center and Staten Island Hospital have not experienced "any water problems to date."

"And the hospital has basements," he added.

When Philip Minardo, who attended the meeting as a representative of state Sen. John J. Marchi, asked for some "compelling reasons" for building the campus in Ocean Breeze as opposed to Willowbrook, Scampas rattled off a list.

Scampas also said "building from scratch would allow the college to develop," and placing the campus near the psychiatric center and hospital would facili-

tate the expansion of its medical curriculum.

In addition, he said, the site would be easier to reach by both public transportation and car, a point echoed by college student Mona Shriver, who said some 2,300 Brooklyn residents attend CSI and would find it easier getting to Ocean Breeze.

Community Board 2, which came out for locating the campus near the psychiatric center several years ago, has called for environmental impact and traffic studies on the Willowbrook site, maintaining a college facility in that area would overtax the existing road system.

Minardo, who said he was not sure which site Marchi supported, said he would report what he had learned at the meeting to the senator.

"You'll get some correspondence from him on this," he said.

When Scampas asked if Marchi would use his "influence" as chairman of the powerful Senate Finance Committee in getting the campus located in Willowbrook, Minardo said he could not answer the question.

At that point an audience member yelled: "Why don't the elected officials give their opin-

ions? If it were election time they'd be here."

Councilman Frank Fossella, who attended the meeting as an observer, declined comment. Assemblyman Eric Vitaliano and Borough President Ralph Lamberti also were represented.

Lamberti has said he is leaning toward the Willowbrook site, but his representative at last night's meeting, John DeGiorno, would not say where the borough president stands. He did, however, indicate that Lamberti would not let any project on the Ocean Breeze site proceed without the community being apprised.

The Ocean Breeze site was condemned by the state more than two decades ago and was acquired by Dormitory Authority in 1972. At the time of the condemnation the land was slated to be part of the psychiatric center.

The coalition, which is composed of eight Mid-Island civic associations, has collected 9,000 signatures on petitions supporting the Ocean Breeze site and hopes to get 25,000 names.