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Staten Island

Daily News, Monday, March 25, 1985

Gov to get center rehab plans

By MARY ENGELS

Recommendations for the final disposition of the Staten Island Developmental Center, formerly Willowbrook, are expected to be presented to Gov. Cuomo by tomorrow.

In January, the governor pledged to close the 380-acre, state-owned facility by 1987.

John Egan, commissioner of the state's Office of General Services and chairman of the Willowbrook Task Force, has been busy polling task force members during the last several days on their choices.

"Clearly, the College of Staten Island made an excellent proposal and the majority of members like it. The problem now is how do we accommodate virtually all of the recommendations within the available acreage," Egan said.

THE COLLEGE already has completed a design plan to consolidate both its St. George and Sunnyside campuses at Willowbrook, utilizing many existing buildings on the property.

Egan pointed out the task force also was very cognizant of the Greenbelt proposal concept's preserving much of

the open woodlands and the requests for a recreational center for the handicapped.

"Our job," Egan said, "is to put it in priority order, not rule out any of the requests and put it in a way that nothing is cast in concrete, but point out both the plusses and minuses," he said.

A charge by the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, an environmentalist group, that the task force was considering turning over the majority of the property, almost 290 acres, to the college, was termed "untrue" by Egan.

"If anything, the college may get less than they asked for, which was some 187 acres," he said.

"We are certainly thinking about all the other requests, some of which can be harmonious with the college's plans."

ONE REQUEST that drew a large response, Egan noted, was a shelter for animals requested by the Staten Island Council on Animal Welfare.

Although Staten Island legislators agreed for the most part that there is room for The College of Staten Island on the property, concerns still were voiced on the use of the remainder of the land.

Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly (D-Staten Island) said she was "more

concerned with the utilization of property for the handicapped.

"I am trying to protect the interests of the handicapped and have had legislation introduced into the budget calling for \$250,000 for planning and design money for the handicapped on the Richmond Complex, which is part of the state property that will be utilized for the mentally retarded."

Assemblyman Robert Straniero (R-C Staten Island) said, "I think that all the other community based recommendations can be accommodated on the site and I think that the task force should continue to be the sounding board for all those organizations."

STANIERE NOTED that it was important that the task force recommendations be submitted "as soon as possible before the budget process begins."

On the other hand, Assemblyman Eric Vitaliano (D-Staten Island) said he felt "the process the task force is pursuing as an advisory committee should continue."

"Although I would certainly recommend legislation monies for the site planning of the College of Staten Island," Vitaliano said, "I don't feel the whole process should be rushed to accommodate the college."