

CSI plans 5 Willowbrook ballfields

By JULIE MACK

Advance Staff Writer

The College of Staten Island wants to build five extra ballfields on its proposed Willowbrook campus to replace eight community ballfields on the land the college wants to develop.

The proposed ballfields could be used by the same community groups that use the present fields at the Willowbrook site, Kenneth Klindtworth, CSI facilities director, said. The land is currently controlled by the Staten Island Developmental Center, which is scheduled to close in 1987. CSI wants to obtain about 230 acres of the soon-to-be vacated property to consolidate its campuses now located in St. George and Sunnyside.

Construction of the extra ballfields could eliminate the biggest barrier to CSI's plans, by soothing community athletic groups who were outraged by the college's plan to build a sports complex on land that now contains eight ballfields used by thousands of Islanders.

Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly had said Island legislators would not approve the CSI proposal until an accommodation was worked out for the community athletic groups.

Mrs. Connelly said she has seen CSI's latest proposal, and "it could solve the problem" but only if the ballfields were controlled by the city Parks and Recreation Department, rather than by the college.

Klindtworth said the college "would have no problem" with letting the Parks Department operate the ballfields. "We're very flexible," he said.

Under CSI's latest proposal, four baseball fields and a soccer field would be created where a

power plant serving SIDC now stands. The power plant is outdated and is scheduled to be demolished, Klindtworth said.

"We're asking for that land and we would use the fields for college intramural athletics," Klindtworth said. "But we would only be using them during school hours." The fields would be open for community use during late afternoons, nights and weekends, he said.

With the construction of the five extra ballfields, Klindtworth added, community groups that now use the SIDC ballfields would be unaffected by the college's proposed move to the property.

Mrs. Connelly said she likes the idea of putting extra ballfields on the power plant site, but added that she is concerned about having the college control use of the fields. There is no guarantee for the future that the college would continue its plan to let the community use the fields, she said; moreover, the college could develop the property and eliminate the fields if it so desired.

"I still think the preferential way to handle it is to hand the fields over to the Parks Department," she said.

Mrs. Connelly noted that at meetings last year on disposition of the SIDC property, the Parks Department had expressed an interest in operating the ballfields. "If they are willing to do it, then that's the answer," she said. "Everyone would know where the property belonged and it wouldn't change the status quo. It would be an ideal situation."