

Kings Park psych site cleanup estimate at \$215M

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A long-awaited engineering study estimates cleanup costs at the former Kings Park Psychiatric Hospital will be more than three times the original estimate - a total of \$215 million, according to the state.

That's the price of demolishing all 57 abandoned buildings on the property and returning the 368 acres to open space, said a statement from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, which commissioned the study by Dvirka and Bartilucci.

The bulk of the cost, about \$186 million, pays for tearing down the buildings and cleaning up asbestos and other hazardous materials. Other costs include \$26 million to demolish and remediate five miles of underground steam tunnels and \$3.7 million to excavate materials dumped on the property over the years.

"We thought this was a huge hurdle," said Eileen Larrabee, spokeswoman for state parks, adding that now "we can have real, substantive conversation" on what to do with the property.

While the cleanup estimate is a critical number for planning purposes, there is still no definite schedule for the clean up or any other plans for the property. Community groups have suggested cultural, educational and recreational facilities be built on the massive waterfront property. The park, right now, receives 85,000 visitors annually.

Legislation would be required for the state to sell the property to developers and state officials have not indicated they plan to do so.

"The state created the mess, the state has to find the means to clean it up, regardless of how big it is," said Linda Henninger, a civic activist and park proponent who yesterday attended a meeting with state parks officials where the estimate was disclosed. "Nothing was said that makes me think they were not going to" complete the cleanup.

Before the study was completed, the cost for cleanup was estimated to be around \$60 million, based on estimates made about a decade ago by developers looking at what it would take to start building on the property. State Sen. [John Flanagan](#) (R-East Northport) secured \$29 million for park cleanup and agreed to spend \$3.6 million for the environmental study. He said the actual cost will be determined when the projects are put out for bid.

"The numbers are certainly daunting," said the senator, who attended the meeting.

Flanagan said he'd like to see a master plan to decide what should be done at the park. He also wants to encourage some private business partnerships with the state to help fund it, he said, and urges Gov.-elect [Andrew Cuomo](#) to put money back in the capital budget for state parks.

The question of what will happen to the property has been in flux for over a decade, since 1999, when then Gov. [George Pataki](#) first made a portion of the land Nissequogue River State Park, later adding the rest of the property in 2006.

In February 2009, after community groups clamored for some resolution of the property, then State Parks Commissioner Carol Ash ordered the demolition of 15 buildings deemed unsafe, which will cost \$14 million. Requests for bids for that project will go out soon.