

**October 26, 2012**

It appears that the New York Islanders are leaving the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum for the comforts of the recently opened Barclays Center in Brooklyn. While it was urged that a major event facility be created at the 77 acre Hub site, to replace the outdated and obsolete Coliseum, it seems that Charles Wang, the owner of the New York Islanders, has run out of time and patience. It is unfortunate that our former source of civic pride and identity has become a laughable source of civic disappointment and embarrassment.

Now that the Coliseum's major tenant, our NHL hockey team, will abandon Nassau County for the new facility located over the MTA's Atlantic Rail Yard in Brooklyn, there should be an open and transparent process to determine the best use for the 77 acre Hub site located in the heart of Nassau County. When the former Mitchel Field Air Force Base was closed in 1962, hundreds of acres were set aside for the campuses of Hofstra University and Nassau Community College. While Hofstra University, the adjacent not for profit land owner would probably love to have another 77 acres of public land for its own purposes, such efforts should be resisted.

The 77 acres at the Hub need to become a direct source of urgently needed tax dollars and revenue, rather than falling into the hands of tax exempt educational institutions that have already been provided more than an adequate share of the public lands obtained from Nassau County. If educational institutions are to become part of the equation, however, then there are over a dozen major bio-engineering institutions that have already submitted competitive proposals to convert portions of Roosevelt Island into a science based incubator that could just as easily add their presence to the metropolitan area in the middle of Nassau County as an island in the middle of the East River.

There remains some discussion of a professional soccer team moving to Nassau County. Since the Major Soccer League has announced its plans to develop a state of the art facility at Flushing Meadows Park in Queens, one must ask, how many professional soccer venues are really needed in the metropolitan area? While the revival of the legendary New York Cosmos has been discussed, for example, if such a facility is to be built in Nassau County, it should be constructed with private, and not public, funding. Perhaps now as the Coliseum's future viability is in serious doubt, the building of a professional soccer stadium somewhere within the former Mitchel Field campus should be explored.

The self-interests of the special interest groups should not dictate what takes place at the Hub. The fact that the faculty senate at Hofstra University opposes the use of the Hub for a casino does not mean such a facility should not be opened there. It appears the Coliseum is at the end of its useful life as a professional hockey venue. Perhaps converting it to a revenue generating casino makes more sense rather than it become a drain on Nassau County taxpayer's strained resources. A casino at the Hub may become our most viable and best alternative, since all other proposals have seemed to have ended up in the penalty box.