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Councilman Ydani Rodriguez wants the island transferred to the Parks Department.

Justin von Bujdoss, one of the chaplains for the Correction Department, said Hart Island plays an important role for grieving families. “It is very painful to have someone you love end up here,” Bujdoss said. “Yet, they are here and so there is a way to connect to them.”

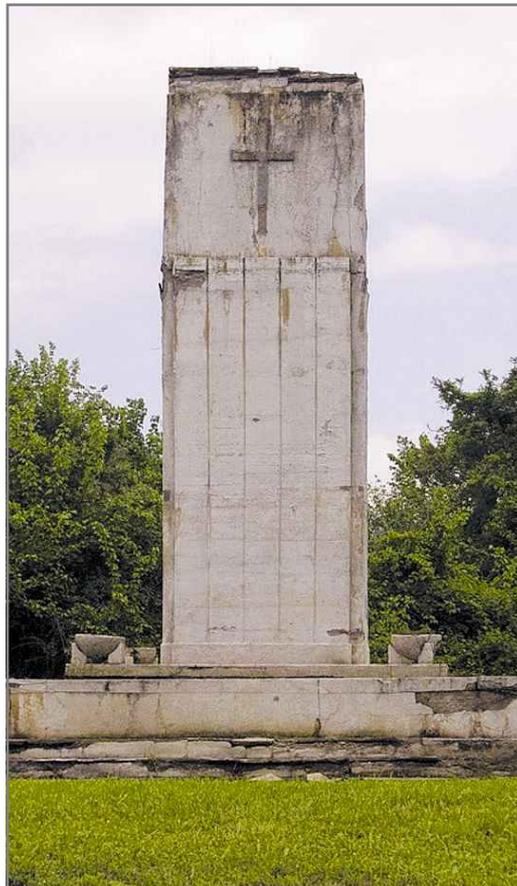
Bujdoss said the staff working on Hart Island have a real reverence for it. “For me this is a very special place really, what it means to be human, what it means to connect to people, what it means to love and also what it means to lose someone.”

“Being a city cemetery, it represents that whole history of the entire city,” Bujdoss said.

For Hunt and Rodriguez, a long-term solution is vital. Many of the buildings, including a chapel, should be fenced off and allowed to naturally crumble, Hunt said.

Rodriguez favors use of one building as a museum to chronicle the history of the island and the dead. Hunt believes the island could be reforested and used more widely as a natural burial space, not just as a potter’s field.

“I intend to make this a city-wide conversation,” Rodriguez said.



The Peace Monument was built by inmates after World War II on Hart Island in the Bronx.

FEDS PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY FOR PLUM ISLAND SALE

BY JOAN GRALLA

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The battle over the future of Long Island’s Plum Island, which the U.S. government decided to sell almost a decade ago, took another turn when it agreed to address some of the concerns and criticisms raised by conservationists.

The General Services Administration, which manages the federal government’s real estate, said Friday that in 2019 it will undertake a new environmental analysis of the island to “document conditions that have changed and new information” developed since the first analysis was finalized in 2013.

Environmentalists do not expect the new review to delay the 2023 sale of the 840-acre island, located 1½ miles off Orient Point. And the Connecticut Fund for the Environment — Save the Sound, which sued to block the transaction, said it still must evaluate how the additional study might affect the lawsuit it filed two years ago.

But Roger Reynolds, chief legal officer for the Connecticut Fund for the Environment — Save the Sound, said in a statement, “We are extremely pleased” the federal government is planning to fix “radical deficiencies” in the first environmental review, which failed to fully assess all the island’s flora and fauna, for example.

Reynolds stressed the government

has still not pledged to fix a crucial problem in its initial analysis: the failure to consider preserving the island’s open land and its surrounding waters, which are home to many federally endangered and threatened species.

Advocates fear Plum Island will be sold to developers eager to capitalize on the high prices waterfront homes can command on Long Island by building McMansions and condominiums. Archaeologists also want to explore traces of Native Americans, and historians want to preserve the 1869 lighthouse and the 1898 Fort Terry, part of the nation’s coastal defenses from the Spanish-American War to World War II.

“Since there is no reason to think they intend to remedy this glaring and fundamental flaw, we will continue to advocate strongly for relief and permanent conservation of this irreplaceable land,” Reynolds said.

The GSA and Homeland Security could not be reached for comment.

In the new review, the GSA will count and analyze the island’s “biodiversity and ecological potential” during all four seasons of the year, any activities by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and a zoning plan enacted by the Town of Southold in 2013.

Southold’s zoning plan would preserve most of the island’s open space, except for about 175 acres in the west, where there is a federal laboratory.

Boy, 15, charged in shooting

BY MATTHEW CHAYES

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An attempted murder charge was filed Saturday against a 15-year-old boy whom cops shot Friday in Far Rockaway, Queens — allegedly after he refused to drop a gun he had been firing into a dispersing crowd, the NYPD said.

The shooting happened near Redfern and Nameoke avenues about 11:03 p.m., when two officers in uniform saw the teen firing at the crowd that officers from the 101st police precinct had been trying to break up about a half-hour earlier, according to a transcript, provided by the NYPD, of remarks of Assistant Chief David Barrere.

“Two uniformed police officers observed a male firing a gun towards the dispersing crowd,” said Barrere, commanding officer of Patrol Borough Queens South, according to the transcript. “The officers engaged the male and gave him verbal commands to drop the gun. The officers fired at the male

striking him several times.”

Meris Campbell, a spokeswoman for the Queens district attorney’s office, which is prosecuting the case, said: “He was shot several times, but I don’t have exactly where it was” on his body.

“He was shooting at the crowd, not at the police. There was apparently an argument. He was involved, and then he pulled out the weapon and then he started to shoot at the crowd,” Campbell said Saturday night.

The NYPD released a photo of the black Smith & Wesson handgun they said was recovered at the scene.

The teen was brought to Long Island Jewish Medical Center in New Hyde Park and was in stable condition as of early Saturday, according to the transcript; the two officers were brought to South Nassau Communities Hospital “for an evaluation.”

The teen, whose name was not officially disclosed, also was charged with attempted criminal possession of a weapon and criminal use of a firearm, according to a news release Saturday.