

Mental Health Island Needs To Be Studied

Mrs. R.E. Johnson Named
Temporary Chairman of
Citizens Committee

By JOHN E. CONCEVITCH

An organization to coordinate and explore the possibility of establishing adequate mental health treatment facilities on Staten Island was formed last night at a meeting in the board room of Staten Island Hospital.

Experts in the psychiatric field, medical doctors, social workers, Parent-Teacher Association officials and clergymen were represented at the session sponsored by the New York State Society for Mental Health, with which the Island unit may become affiliated with in the future.

There was often sharp disagreement on just what steps should be undertaken to properly handle the mental health cases on the Island.

Opinion Unanimous

However, there was not one dissenting vote to a resolution that called for the establishment of an Island unit to seek out effective means of dealing with those who need help be it a minor illness or a chronic condition.

Mrs. Robert E. Johnson was chairman of the meeting and was later named temporary chairman of a committee to set up an organization of citizens interested in community mental health.

William Beatty, assistant executive secretary of the New York State Society for Mental Health, discussed the goals of the society and led those attending into a lively and not always harmonious discussion period.

Dr. Margaret T. Ross, Miss Mary Fleming and Miss Kathleen Hagood told of the society's activities.

Doctors Give Views

There were many professional minds ready to give advice and relate experiences in the field of establishing some sort of mental health program on the Island.

Among those who spoke were: Dr. V. T. Davis, chief of psychiatry and neurology in the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital, Clifton; Dr. Walter Woodward of the Payne-Whitney Clinic.

Dr. Harold H. Berman, director

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of the Willowbrook State School; Dr. Martin Lazar, assistant director of the Willowbrook State School, and Vernon Stutzman, administrator of Staten Island Hospital.

Dr. Berman deplored the fact that too often a doctor has to examine a patient and find that he needs mental health therapy only to have to turn around and tell the patient that there is no place on the Island where he can receive such treatment.

"Diagnose and dispose," said the Willowbrook State School director, "is no good."

Dr. Woodward in answer to a question of just how helpful traveling clinics are, said that they are at the most only stop-gap measures.

Distinctions in Treatment

It was also generally agreed that if treatment facilities should be established on the Island on a large scale, distinction should be made between treatment centers for the seriously ill and mental hygiene centers for those who need short-term help.

Throughout the discussion, however, there was a continued tone of caution as to just how much of a demand should be created for mental health in the eyes of the general public.

Dr. Woodward warned, and most of the professional men agreed, that to create a demand for such mental hygiene help through educational methods and then not be able to meet it with proper facilities would cause a very antagonistic attitude on the part of the public towards those working in the field.

The committee, named on a volunteer basis, will work with Mrs. Johnson on presenting an organizational set-up. It is hoped that the committee will be able to complete its work by fall and a Staten Island mental health society be established to carry out the ideas brought forth at last night's meeting.

Willowbrook Land Swap OK'd by City

Estimate Board also Acts
On Sewer, Street Work;
Votes Ferry Repair Cost

An exchange of land between the state's Willowbrook School for Mental Defectives and the city-held property for the Willowbrook parkway right-of-way was formally approved yesterday by the Board of Estimate.

The swap was authorized by the State Legislature in 1947, but not formally acted upon by the city until yesterday. Under the exchange a strip of land 4,000 feet long, taking in approximately 32 acres, has been added to the parkway right of way at the south end of the state tract, or northwest of Forest Hill road. In return the state will get from the city title to an irregular plot of approximately 20 acres which takes in the state school's present Victory boulevard entrance.

The transfer gives the Willowbrook State School a frontage of 160 feet along Victory boulevard, from Canterbury avenue west.

The exchange permits the city to reduce the bend in Willowbrook parkway as it swings through the Willowbrook area.

Other Items OK'd

The Board of Estimate also fixed the date for a public hearing on construction of a new sanitary sewer in Sunnyside, approved a final map modifying a street system in Greenridge to permit construction of a new trunk sewer, granted preliminary authorization for grading and paving a street in Castleton Corners, and voted \$87,838 to cover the cost of extra work performed on the three new Island ferryboats at the Mariners Harbor shipyard of the Bethlehem Steel Company last year.

The sanitary sewer on which a hearing will be held May 22, is to be built in Seneca avenue, from Oswego street to a point 100 feet north of Tioga street. The project is estimated to cost \$5,300, all of which will be assessed on the local area.

The final map approved by the board modifies the street system within the area bounded by Vinton street, Colon avenue, Arthur Kill road and Cicero avenue, and Abingdon avenue from Vinton street to a point 630 feet north. The change is necessary to permit proper grade for a new trunk sewer, which will empty through a new sewage treatment plant on Richmond Creek at the foot of Abingdon avenue, expected to undergo construction before the end of the year.

Preliminary authorization was granted for the grading, curbing, flagging and paving Sanford place from Royal Oak road to Slosson avenue, Castleton Corners, a job estimated to cost \$13,500, all of which will be assessed on property owners of the street.

The extra work on the three new ferryboats, all three of which were delivered to the city last year, resulted from changes in specifications ordered by the city to improve their operation and increase safety, after construction of three boats was contracted for.

The board appropriated \$92,664 for the employment of additional personnel in the comptroller's Special Tax Division to help collect additional revenue from special taxes during the balance of the fiscal year ending June 30. It also approved a local law amending the Administrative Code to prohibit attorneys and others from soliciting retainers in connection with the reduction of assessments.