

Halfway house purchase terms win initial OK

By SUSAN FRY

The Willowbrook Developmental Center will open the first of four proposed halfway houses in about six months if final legal agreements between the state and a New Brighton home owner are reached.

At a meeting yesterday with a representative from the state's Bureau of Real Property, Frank L. Salvatore agreed to sell his three-story house at 200 Tysen St. for use as a halfway house for mild and moderately retarded persons, now either residents or out-patients at Willowbrook. The price of the house was not available yesterday.

John Moore, a bureau representative, said the written agreement, a formal state procedure, would be forwarded to Albany for approval by state commissioners. Final approval, which Moore suggested would take about four weeks, will be made by the attorney general's office, which would then arrange for the closing.

13 ROOMS

The 13-room house would be utilized by 10 or 12 persons preparing to move ultimately into an independent living situation. There will also be space for several patients now in the community on a family care basis, who would occasionally need counseling services for a place to stay while his or her "family" is vacationing.

According to Robert Gang, a Willowbrook psychologist, the house would probably not be ready for occupancy until about six months. It will be for men and women over the age of 13 and out of school, who either have jobs or involvement in outside workshops or training programs. They will do their own cooking, cleaning and budgeting.

"We are anticipating that the state will allocate money which we can budget ourselves, without having to contract through them as we do at Willowbrook," Gang explained.

"We see this as being a very important aspect of preparing them for independent living. The halfway house will be a temporary facility for these people," Gang said, noting that the patient's stay at the house will depend upon his or her own development and how skilled the staff will be in meeting their needs.

Five permanent employees will be hired to work with the residents. They will be assisted by volunteers to provide 24-hour coverage in three rotating shifts. No staff member will live at the halfway house since, Gang said, the state's civil service system does not provide for "house parent positions" and the union prohibits 24-hour employment.

No major renovations are expected to be made at the house, which had been converted into a two-family structure, although Gang said partitions would be removed and improvements made based on state building codes.

"In the meantime, we will be setting up programs, training staff and screening prospective residents," he said.

The halfway house concept is in keeping with the state's plan to relocate patients in large institutions into community centers. Sites for three other facilities have not yet been found. All halfway house residents will be from Staten Island or have local parent sponsors.