

State to open home for retarded, 2 charge

By WALTER COLEMAN

The State Department of Mental Hygiene, despite its denials, will open a vacant nursing home in Concord for the care of mentally retarded persons after the Nov. 5 elections, two speakers charged last night.

In making the charges during a public hearing in St. Simon's Episcopal Church, Concord, John W. Russell Jr., Democratic candidate for the Assembly in the 60th District, and Howard Safar, administrator of the Staten Island Mental Health Society, both said they heard it from various state sources.

The issue arose when James Britton, speaking for the Concord Civic Association on the proposed 120-bed expansion of Doctors Hospital, said the group could not make any decision until the issue of the Island View Care Center at 1000 Targee St., was cleared up.

The facility, originally built for a nursing home, later sought to operate as a center for the mentally retarded in need of nursing care.

It was proposed that persons from Willowbrook Developmental Center would be brought there to take advantage of the 240-bed facility.

In July, the state department said it would not follow through on the plan as long as there was community and governmental opposition to the plan.

During last night's meeting, Thomas Prisco, chairman of the hospital and health committee of Community Board 3, which sponsored the session to discuss the proposed 120-bed expansion of Doctors Hospital, passed around a letter from the department.

In the letter, the agency said it had abandoned its plans to

use the nursing home as a center for retarded adults.

Russell then spoke, claiming that persons in the state government had told him the facility would be used for mentally retarded persons after the election.

He intimated that those he had talked to felt it was politically necessary to keep the plan under wraps until after November.

Safar also said persons he had talked to within the department had told him that retarded persons would be moved in after the election.

After several persons had told him of the plan, Safar said, he called several others who also confirmed that after Nov. 5 the nursing home, which has long stood vacant, would be used to care for retarded persons.

On the expansion of the hospital, the committee decided to reserve decision on the addition until a meeting with city officials and concerned persons could be called to discuss the traffic problem.

Donald S. Bloomberg, executive director of the hospital, said he acknowledged the problem and added the hospital was seeking to lease land next to PS 48, Concord, to relieve the parking problem.

He said the hospital would fence off the area and make the only entrance and exit on Targee St. as far from the school as possible.

The Parent-Teacher Association of the school had said this was acceptable, he continued. Robert Dizard, principal of the school, who was at the meeting, also said it was acceptable to him.

In making his remarks, Dizard said there was a need for more hospital beds on the Island and that the hospital's proposal makes "a bad situation tolerable."

Britton, speaking for the community, said the parking problem was intolerable and objected to Bloomberg's remarks that the proposed facility was for the community.

"He said it is in line with servicing the community, then he should come to the community," he continued.

He also objected to Bloomberg's remarks that the hospital was expanding to serve the community. It is a private hospital, he continued, "and the name of the game is money."

Bloomberg, however, said that the hospital has a day-to-day waiting list of 30 to 35 persons and needed the addition.

He also said that because the hospital would be funding the expansion through private means, it could complete the building faster than the proposed expansion of other Island hospitals.

Within 12 to 16 months after approval was received from the State Health Department, the addition would be completed and in use, he continued.

Britton, however, said that the last thing the area needs, with two medical centers, a hospital and a proposed nursing home within walking distance, is any more building.

He said it was another example of a concern "trying to force something down the throat" of a community and that residents wanted answers.

Trevor Mills, chairman of the board, said the committee would reserve decision until after the meeting with officials to determine the affect on the traffic situation.

He also scored Dr. Dominic Miraldi for pushing Board 2, which has no jurisdiction, to approve the addition.