

3 more group homes for retarded eyed by state

By MARY BETH PFEIFFER

The state plans to open within the next three months three group homes for 30 severely mentally retarded persons — two of them in a New Brighton apartment building and one in a 16-room Victorian mansion in Westerleigh.

The homes will take in, for the most part, former residents of the Willowbrook Developmental Center in the center's court-ordered effort to reduce its population to 250 by 1981 will be sponsored by United Cerebral Palsy Inc. and the Catholic Guardian Society.

The plans were revealed yesterday at the monthly meeting of the Staten Island Regional Retardation and Disabilities Council held at the Institute for Basic Research in Mental Retardation, Willowbrook.

The Metropolitan Placement Unit, which coordinates placement of Willowbrook residents in the community, has approved the proposal for two group homes in the Castleton Park Houses, 185 St. Mark's Pl., according to Barbara Blum, MPU director. The facilities will

care for 20 severely retarded and multiply-handicapped adults, under the management of United Cerebral Palsy.

However, MPU has yet to approve a Catholic Guardian Society request for a 10-resident home for severely retarded youngsters at 42 Boulevard, Mrs. Blum said.

The Westerleigh site must first be approved by the state Facilities Development Corp., which will evaluate the structure and determine a fair rental price, Mrs. Blum said.

"We're particularly excited that the society wishes to open a group home for

the retarded," she said, adding that the organization, which operates a home for moderately retarded youngsters on Howard Ave., Grymes Hill, has experience in the field.

Target dates for opening all three facilities is "around August or shortly thereafter," Mrs. Blum added.

Mrs. Blum said she anticipates community opposition to the facilities, but hopes community support can be gained through education.

"I have yet to find many neighbor-

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This 16-room house at 42 The Boulevard, Westerleigh, is the proposed site of a group home for Willowbrook Developmental Center residents.

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hoods welcoming group homes, but with a lot of work in terms of community education...we hope to handle whatever resistance we get," she said.

Mrs. Blum said she plans to meet with a Community Board 1 steering committee June 8 to discuss the new facilities.

Vincent Montalbano, chairman of that board, was present at yesterday's meeting. The proposals have been referred to the board's health services and community committees, which will render their determination at the board's June 14 meeting, he said.

Arthur Bavoso, a representative of the Catholic Guardian Society, told the council he met Monday with "about 25" area residents to discuss the Boulevard group home.

"I'm still bearing the scars and bruises," of the three-hour meeting, Bavoso joked in opening. Residents were concerned about adequate supervision of residents and declining property values, he said.

The Guardian Society is seeking council approval of the project, but the council reserved decision yesterday's until the society submits more detailed plans

of the proposed program and adopts certain minor recommendations.

The UCP plan has yet to be submitted to the council, according to Dominic Pirraglia, chairman.

In other council developments, the council was told of another setback in the efforts of the Volunteers of America to establish a group home for 12 mildly-retarded adults in the Arlington Terrace Apartments in Mariners Harbor.

Beatrice Victor, former council chairwoman, read a letter to the council from the Arlington Terrace Civic Association, which voted by "overwhelming majority" to oppose to facility. The civic association said a 13-story apartment complex is too much like an institutional setting and the residents may have problems negotiating hallways and elevators.

Several council members felt the association's reasoning had "no substance," and criticized the group for failing to tour other established group facilities before making their judgment.

Volunteers of America has been searching for a site for the group home for almost three years. Two previous sites were rejected because of state

building code regulations.

Despite community opposition, the council reaffirmed its support of the Arlington group home site but voted to continue community education. Mrs. Blum said the home is expected to open in late June.

In other business:

¶ Sonia Braniff, representing Community School Board 31, announced Title 1 summer programs for mentally retarded and handicapped youngsters. The programs, essentially the same as those conducted last summer, will be held at PS 16, Tompkinsville; the Occupational Training Center, New Brighton; South Beach Psychiatric Center, Ocean Breeze, and the Camelot Treatment Center, Port Richmond.

Additionally, several programs will be operated in group homes conducted by Mt. Loretto and the Catholic Guardian Society.

¶ Robert Piegari, an administrator of the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Council, announced that bus service for Staten Island's elderly and disabled population will begin in mid-June, since funds and drivers for the project have been secured.