

Board 2 OKs Dongan Hills site for center to aid retarded

By DIANE C. LORE

Before a crowd of approximately 600 community residents from Dongan Hills and New Dorp, Community Board 2 last night approved a proposal by the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook to open a therapy, counseling and service center for the retarded in the Dongan Hills area.

In a separate action, the board postponed, pending a public hearing, a vote on the proposal by the Richboro Community Mental Health Council to open a drug-free counseling center in New Dorp.

Community turnout for both controversial proposals was so heavy that the site of the board meeting had to be changed at the last moment from the board room of the nurses quarters at Sea View Hospital and Home to the Sea View auditorium which seats 750 people.

By a vote of 26 to 8, with seven abstentions, the board voted to approve a recommendation that a center for the care of the mentally retarded in the Board 2 area be opened in a two-story brick building at 26 Dumont Ave., off Hylan Blvd. and Old Town Rd. in Dongan Hills to be operated by the Borough

Developmental Services.

The board approved the site with the provisions that a 200-client limit be placed on the number of retarded persons the office would serve and that a community advisory board be set up to monitor the facility.

Elin M. Howe, director of the Staten Island Developmental Center, has said she is not opposed to the formation of a community advisory board and has invited community interest.

Board member Arthur Traut drew a round of applause from Dongan Hills residents in the audience when he asked

how many other sites had been considered for the office.

Mrs. Linda Carelli, chairman of the board's mental health committee, replied that the Dumont Ave. site was the site favored by the Developmental Center. The building is now being used by the New York Foundling Hospital, she noted, and would not require extensive renovation.

The former Robert Hall clothing store on Hylan Blvd. was considered as a site, she said, but was rejected by the Developmental Center because it required some renovations.

Many Dongan Hills residents have suggested the office be placed in the South Beach Psychiatric Center, where United Cerebral Palsy Association of New York already provides services for 50 former Willowbrook patients. The Dongan Hills United Civic Association and the Beachview Manor Civic Association, representing area homeowners, are in favor of using the Ocean Breeze center, rather than the Dumont Ave. site.

The Dumont Ave. site would house office space, two activities rooms, a conference room and waiting room. The building would be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on two evenings during the week.

The building would be staffed by approximately 35 persons, including social workers, psychologists, case managers, therapists, clerical help and administrators.

After approving the Dongan Hills site, the board turned its attention to a proposal by the Richboro Community Mental Health Council to open a drug-free counseling center in the former New

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