

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

(Continued on Page 2)

Page 1
242

Dorp RAP Center on New Dorp Lane.

Several hundred New Dorp residents in the audience, including members of the New Dorp Central Civic Association, shouted, booted, stood on chairs and disrupted the meeting at least three times to show their disapproval of the proposal while board members attempted to discuss it.

Residents demanded a public hearing before any vote be taken. Bowing to community opposition, the board decided to postpone a vote until after a public hearing. Board chairman Raymond Watson told the crowd the date of the hearing will be announced.

Some vociferous residents shouted they wanted to "know now" and demanded a hearing date immediately.

Mrs. Carelli, whose committee re-

views the proposal and presents a recommendation to the full board, was shouted down several times as she attempted to read her committee report.

While the mental health committee, she said, supports Richboro's attempt to open a drug-free counseling center to service the South Shore, it does not make any recommendation on the site for the center. "That is not within our committee to decide," she said.

The resolution cited the lack of any drug-counseling programs serving the South Shore and noted the "alarming increase" reported in the use of drugs among school children.

"That's not true," shouted someone in the audience, as residents interrupted and demanded to know what statistics had been used when the committee was drafting the resolution.

Michael Primiano, president of the New Dorp Central Civic Association, who is also a community board member, said New Dorp residents "were so upset" over the Richboro proposal that they are planning to organize a mass rally next month.

Richboro hopes to provide an estimated 120 clients a week with drug-free counseling services. Under the proposal, outpatients would receive a minimum of three hours per week of counseling at the center, with day care clients receiving 10 hours per week. The program would be aimed primarily at pre-teen and high school students and would receive most of its funding from the federal National Institute for Drug Abuse.

Although the New Dorp RAP Center building is the favored site for the center, the owner of the building has said he will not rent the space to Richboro, which would force Richboro to select another possible South Shore site for the center.

In other matters, the board:

☐ Discussed the placement of a traffic light on Reid and Parkinson Aves. near PS 46, South Beach. Board member Jack Yousha, who inspected the site, noted there are no traffic signals along Reid Ave. near the school. "Reid Ave. is an open road. Anyone can speed right through," he said.

☐ District Service Manager Lillian Prado announced the board will make 490 jobs available within the board area for Island residents 14 to 21 years old. July 10 has been set as the target date for youths to begin employment.

☐ A public hearing was set for 10 a.m. April 29 in the auditorium of the South Beach Psychiatric Center to discuss sources of funds for sewer construction.

☐ Watson announced the formation of a new committee which will deal with health services, senior citizens and youth in the board area. Thomas Prisco will head the committee.

The next board meeting will be May