

## Group home sites far from practical

I would like to take this opportunity to enlighten the public of some of the events that occurred at the public hearing at IS 34, Tottenville, on Nov. 13 concerning the proposed sites for group homes for the mentally retarded at Staten Island Developmental Center.

May I begin by stating that the management of Staten Island Development Center made it a point that the state of New York is being very honest in its commitments that these homes will be the only homes that are proposed for these areas?

There were comments from the public at this point, probably because of past experience with the state of New York's honest.

During this public hearing it was disclosed that many homes that were placed on the market for sale were to become group homes. Various homeowners made statements that they were unaware of their homes being sold to the state of New York.

Ms. Howe, director of Staten Island Developmental Center, responded that she was unaware of this and placed the blame on the rental agents.

An unidentified realtor stated that his agency did not show these homes to the management of Staten Island Developmental Center.

Through this public hearing it was disclosed that many of these areas were unsafe, uninhabitable, etc.

Many civic groups and concerned citizens were appalled by the fact that they were not notified of these proposed sites until four days before the public hearing and wanted to know if this was an example of the Community Board's and the state of New York's honesty and good faith.

From this meeting I received the impression that the state of New York may be planning to dump the mentally retarded all over again, as it did just a short time ago.

I am not against mentally retarded people living in the community, but I

am against the dumping of the mentally retarded in unsafe, uninhabitable homes and areas that are unfit for the public itself.

At this public hearing I proposed that Staten Island Developmental Center renovate the present buildings at the facility to serve as group homes. At the hearing it was disclosed that many members of the community were concerned with the safety of the mentally retarded people that may live in some of the traffic congested areas that were outlined as proposed group home sites. I feel that the 382-acre facility in itself has attractive grounds and not a great deal of traffic, as in some areas in the community. I feel that if the state of New York is willing to spend all this money for purchasing of inhabitable homes at above the cost that the average consumer would pay for a home, then the cost of renovating this facility would probably be less, and more practical.

I sincerely hope that the state of New York is not dumping these residents in the community to meet the 1975 Court Decree stipulation, and save itself from contempt of court. Because if officials are, then these residents are just going from the frying pan to the fire.

The general overall opinion of the people present seemed against these proposed sites because of their concern for the mentally retarded's safety and needs. I think that if other sites were chosen people may be more agreeable.

I hope when the Community Board members decided on these proposed sites they will also remember that they were elected by their neighbors and the people in their community to represent their wishes, as I am elected to represent the employees at Staten Island Developmental Center who, after all their hard working years of devotion to these mentally retarded persons, do not want to see them unhappy, not properly taken care of, and housed in unsafe conditions.

In closing, I hope that the state of New York is really honest in its efforts to properly place the mentally retarded and are not just trying to meet the court mandate. I hope the discrepancies of official honesty by the selection and approval of the unsafe proposed sites are not an example of their sincere concerns for the needs of the mentally retarded people at Staten Island Developmental Center.

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