

## Board 2 OKs center in New Dorp

By DIANE C. LORE

A plan to open a training center on New Dorp Lane to serve mentally retarded and handicapped adults was approved last night by Community Board 2.

Board members voted 18 to 1 in favor of the plan.

A Very Special Place, a private, non-profit organization, is seeking to open a day and evening training center for retarded and handicapped adults in the former RAP Center building on New Dorp Lane.

At a public hearing two weeks ago, New Dorp residents stressed they would welcome the center in their neighborhood, but said they thought traffic and parking problems on New Dorp Lane would create a hazard to the clients.

Some New Dorp residents at the hearing questioned if the RAP Center building would be accessible for people in wheelchairs; if it had adequate fire protection, including fire escapes, and if

the building contained adequate space to store refuse.

Genevieve Benoit, president of A Very Special Place, said the building and site had already been inspected by the state. "No one is more concerned about our clients than us, who will be providing the services," she said.

Community groups on record as opposing the RAP Center site include the 122nd Precinct Community Council and the New Dorp Central Civic Association.

Last night's vote, during the board's monthly meeting at Sea View Hospital and Home, was taken without lengthy or heated discussion some board members expected.

Board member Michael Primiano, a New Dorp resident and president of the New Dorp Central Civic Association, cast the only vote against the proposal, explaining: "We are looking out for their safety." Three members abstained from voting, including Arthur Traut, a New Dorp attorney.

A Very Special Place hopes to serve 80 adults at the center, according to its proposal. Half would come from the South Shore, and the remainder would come from the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook.

Thirty clients would be served during the day programs, while 50 would be served during evening and weekends.

The ratio of staff to clients would be approximately 4-1. The center is to be funded by the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.