

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE, Friday, January 19, 1979

Purpose of home: Give parents a respite

Retarded center eyed for Emerson Hill

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told the state he would live elsewhere and that the Diana Trail residence might be a good group home. State officials thought it was too small for a group home, which usually accommodates eight persons. Respite care seemed a natural.

Elin M. Howe, director of the Staten Island Developmental Center, who calls respite care a "most desperately needed" service, says the structure would house no more than five clients and would have three or four specially trained caretakers. She called the location "extremely desirable."

In her Aug. 23 letter to the community

board, Miss Howe said she would "appreciate board approval." The proposal never got out of the board's mental health subcommittee because, the subcommittee's former chairman Linda Carelli says, she was told the state was not interested.

Miss Howe says the state is interested. The proposal has been put on the subcommittee's Jan. 30 agenda. Some board members say the home would be too costly to renovate and would not have good road access.

John Tillou, an aide to Miss Howe, says the access problem concerned the state, but he added officials now believe the small road is in good shape and

emergency vehicles could get to it. A reporter drove easily to it Wednesday after a 2-inch snowfall.

Tillou says renovation costs, needed to meet safety codes, would not be any more than with other homes for the retarded, plus, he says, there would be no purchase price. "It will meet our needs," he says.

Some officials say that funding for participating clients could be a problem. Technically, parents who have kept their children out of institutions receive no money for their children's care, unlike the \$30,000 spent yearly for an individual at the developmental center in Willowbrook.

The money, state officials say, could come either from the center's regular budget or a special appropriation state officials have asked the governor to make in his budget to be announced Jan. 31. The budget line calls for money for 40 respite beds in the state. State officials declined to specify the amount of the budget request.

Whatever Community Board 2 should vote, however, it might not matter. Miss Howe says that under current legislation the state is not required to get community approval for so few beds. The house is not considered a group home. "I hope they approve," she says, "but it doesn't need board approval."

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