

Some supplies already beyond means

Island high school principals rap Koch cuts

By TOM ROBOTHAM

Principals of Island high schools and other representatives of the education community last night criticized Mayor Koch's proposed education budget cuts, with one representative calling the cuts "preposterous."

The discussion of cuts spanned more than two hours of a Borough Board meeting in Borough Hall, with each principal speaking of specific problems his school was having. Yet all the speakers expressed the same basic — that cuts of the magnitude of those proposed by Koch would accelerate a current trend forcing principals to cut programs and put off facility improvements.

Speaking first was Elaine Weiss, high school chairman of the Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations, who said that Koch in the past had stated that education was a "priority." She contrasted this statement with figures, however, noting that the proposed \$83.3-million cut in the education budget is vastly greater than cuts proposed for such "priorities" as the police and fire departments.

Many of the problems mentioned by the principals were complex, regardless of budgetary problems. But James Canfield, principal of McKee High School, spoke of deficiencies at the vocational school that more funding could immediately get rid of.

"The furniture is falling apart," he

said, "and we have no intercom system." He also said the school is already functioning on such a tight budget that he cannot obtain supplies required to teach students new developments in plumbing, for instance.

Most of the discussion, however, centered on problems that were not so tangible as those mentioned by Canfield.

Samuel Altman, principal of Susan Wagner, said he recently read about an ex-Susan Wagner student who had been arrested for armed robbery. He said he was disturbed because "we weren't able to give this student enough."

Altman made no apologies for Susan Wagner's service. "We are doing a great deal with what we have," he said, "and we are better equipped than we were five years ago. All we need is more money."

It was stressed by many of the speakers that it is not only extra-curricular activities and programs for advanced students that are being cut. Many remedial classes are in danger too, they said, pointing out that high school students reading at a fourth grade level are not uncommon.

"We are dealing with youngsters who are in dire need of help," one speaker said. He added that these students not only need training in basic skills but need to be "turned on to school" generally.

Towards the end of the discussion, the principal of Tottenville High School — the second largest high school in the city — spoke about the wide range of services that today's schools must perform.

The principal, Howard Saronson, said, "School should be more than the three R's. It should allow children to blossom, to flower."

His statement was countered by Councilman Angelo Arculeo, who said schools need to get back to the basics. "I find among the youth today a total inability to articulate. He added that the conversation of many of today's youths "is almost primitive."

But Arculeo said he believes the members of the Borough Board are sensitive to the needs of schools.

Borough President Gaeta reinforced this statement. "You can be sure a battle will be put up when it comes time to negotiate the budget."

Other matters, the board discussed, were the relocation of three Staten Island Developmental Center residents to apartment on Ocean Ave., South Beach, without notification to Community Board 2. It was noted that during a meeting last week officials of the center had promised to notify the community board of such matters, although they are not required by law when the relocation involves less than four residents.

The status of the Staten Island Botanical Garden, a representative for the garden expressed the need for it to possess an individual legal status, apart from the Snug Harbor Cultural Center where it is located.

A letter from Mayor Koch stating that a study of the feasibility of industrial development in Charleston and New Springville would be done by the Port Authority unless the board sent word within 60 days requesting that the study not be done.

To discuss retarded

Elin Howe, director of the Staten Island Developmental Center, will be a panelist at a citywide meeting for parents sponsored by the Association for the Help of Retarded Children Sunday at 1:30 p.m. in the Hotel Americana, Manhattan. The meeting is open to the public.