

'Oversaturated' Board 2 rejects group home sites

By DIANE C. LORE

Community Board 2 members last night overwhelmingly rejected all of the state's proposed group home sites for the mentally retarded in the board area, on the basis that the area already is "oversaturated" with community-based care facilities.

The board requested an immediate hearing before Thomas Coughlin, commissioner of the state Office for Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

The board's vote, during its monthly meeting at Sea View Hospital and Home, climaxed weeks of discussion and heated debate on the emotional issue of group homes.

A standing-room-only crowd of more

than 200 jammed the board room in the nurses residence of Sea View, and waited patiently for more than an hour while the board completed other items on its agenda and listened to City Comptroller Harrison Goldin speak.

City police and Sea View security guards patrolled the area near the board room. According to Lillian Prado, district service manager for the board, John Tillou and Scott Booth, representing the Staten Island Developmental Center, were forced to leave the meeting because they had received threats on their lives.

Except for shouts and a smattering of applause, the crowd remained orderly while the board debated the sites.

The sites rejected by the board last night are at 158 Cromwell Ave., Dongan

Hills; 630 Hylan Blvd., Grasmere, and 1582 Richmond Ave., New Springville. Two other sites originally proposed by the state — at 1082 Fingerboard Rd., Grasmere, and at 42 Gadsen Pl., New Springville, were withdrawn from consideration by the owners and did not require the board's vote.

The board debated the issue for more than an hour. At least 20 minutes were spent discussing parliamentary procedure. State Assemblymen Guy Molinari and Paul Viggiano addressed board members on the sites. Councilmen Nicholas LaPorte and Anthony Giacobbe, and Borough President Gaeta also had representatives at the meeting.

Molinari told the board he opposed the site at 158 Cromwell Ave. and suggested

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Community residents jam the nurses' residence at Sea View Hospital and Home during a group home hearing.

S.I. Advance Photo by Tony Carannante