

Voice in the community

Board 2: Caught in the middle and pressured by varied groups

By DIANE C. LORE

Community Board 2 is caught in the middle.

The board encompasses the mid-Island area — an area of generally stable, middle-class neighborhoods— and finds itself caught in the middle of trying to balance new construction and projects with the needed delivery of services to its expanding population.

Frequently the problems leave board members caught in the middle of their responsibilities. Should they "vote their conscience" on problems affecting the board area, or should their vote echo the will of the community they represent, especially when that community strongly opposes a project? Or is there a middle ground between choices?

Community Board 2 takes in the neighborhoods of Arrochar, Bloomfield, Bulls Head, Chelsea, Dongan Hills, Grant City, Grasmere, Lighthouse Hill, Egbertville, Emerson Hill, Midland Beach, New Dorp, New Springville, Oakwood, Ocean Breeze, Richmond, South Beach, Todt Hill, Travis and Willowbrook.

In those communities, board chairman Joseph Manifold noted, "we have

Community Board 2

Joseph Manifold Chairman

Lillian Prado District Service Manager

Office: Second floor, administration building, Sea View Hospital and Home

Phone: 390-8235

just about everything to deal with."

"We have acres of recreation and park areas, the Greenbelt, the wetlands to preserve, the problem of waste disposal and landfill, and the problem of energy needs, pollution and the power plant to contend with," Manifold said.

There are industrial and commercial areas and large health-care facilities including the South Beach Psychiatric Center, Sea View Hospital and Home, and the Staten Island Developmental Center, within the Board 2 area. And there are many flood-prone areas in need of sewers.

"Community Board 2 is caught between the problems of the South Shore and the North Shore," a Borough Hall official observed. "They feel they're being encroached upon by issues like the methadone clinic on the North Shore and the construction boom on the South Shore.

"Their first instinct may be to try to keep everything out — that's only natural to think of self preservation," the official observed. "But really," he added, "all the problems community boards face affect the whole Island. There is no running away."

Island representatives of city agencies, who work closely with the Island's three community boards, generally agree that Board 2 tends to be the board most heavily influenced by reactions of civic groups and area residents.

"Board 2 has several large, well-organized civic groups that know how to make the most of a good thing like a public hearing," commented a local city official, who declined to be identified. "These people may not necessarily be well-read or informed on a particular issue, but they definitely have very

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One of the Community Board 2 areas experiencing a construction boom between Hylan Blvd. and Capodanno Blvd. in Dongan Hills. This was once marshland.

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