

# Board 2 braces itself for fight over group homes for retarded

By MARC DAVIS

Community Board 2 braced itself last night for another round of fighting over group homes.

Nearly two years ago, the board became the center of Staten Island-wide attention when it bitterly argued over the "oversaturation" of group homes for the mentally retarded on Staten Island.

Last night, the possibility of community residences for former South Beach Psychiatric Center patients brought out all the old emotions of the group homes issue — and the most heated debate may be yet to come.

"We are going to be getting into many areas with many agencies who sponsor group homes," said Chairman Joseph Manifold. "We'll be getting inundated because this is the current trend — to dissolve the larger institutions."

News that the state Office for Mental Health (OMH) is now considering three-person apartments — "supportive living facilities" — for former psychiatric patients sparked the debate last night at a meeting in Sea View Hospital and Home.

The apartments will not be provided with 24-hour staffing and could be begun on the Island within the next three to six months, according to health and hospitals Chairman Thomas Prisco. Because the apartments will not house four or more persons, the community boards will not have authority to rule on the residences, as they do for any group residences of between four and 14 persons.

The boards will be notified by OMH purely for informational purposes if such apartments are to be located within their board areas, Manifold said. But because of privacy laws, the addresses of the residences will not be made public, Prisco added.

The news aroused emotions and arguments from board members opposed and in favor of the residences.

"If we open the door on this we'll have the same thing with South Beach that we had with Staten Island Developmental Center," said board member Matthew Carrara. "I'm not taking a snow job from no agency."

Manifold added that he, too, was



Community Board 2 Chairman Joseph Manifold S.I. Advance Photo

wary of the proposal.

"To me, this (supportive living facilities) should not even exist, no matter where it is," Manifold said. "If you're going to have independent living, you'd better have some damn good examples for them to follow, 24 hours a day."

But Tina Joseph, who serves on

the Island's Mental Health Council, argued that former psychiatric patients are not a hazard to the community.

"We're talking about mental health patients, not mentally retarded," Mrs. Joseph said. "These are people who have had mental breakdowns. They don't need 24-hour guards."

In other business, the board re-elected Manifold to a fourth term as board chairman. He was unopposed. Also elected were Jack Deitch, first vice chairman; James Stuckey, second vice chairman; Joseph Pinnola, third vice chairman; Philip Scampas, secretary, and Dorothy Zarrilli, treasurer.

The board also flexed its administrative muscles by withdrawing previously granted approval to zoning variances to businesses that had become a nuisance to the community by violating their variances.

"That puts them out of business," Manifold said. "It shuts down the whole shooting match."

A gas station at 1449 Hylan Blvd., Dongan Hills, from which the Community Cars taxi service has operated, was denied its previously granted variance approval to operate. The 1980 variance had originally been granted only on condition that the car service not operate from the service station.

Community residents have complained to the board about the car service intruding on the neighborhood.

A variance to Narrows Ford on Hylan Blvd., Dongan Hills, to temporarily store new cars on a vacant lot behind its showroom also was withdrawn. Manifold declared that the lot has become "a junk yard."

A proposal to create an enforcement committee to oversee the board's zonings and variances was defeated, despite the board's evident disgust at the lack of enforcement by the city Building Department