

Board 3 approves amusement arcade, park, group home

Community Board 3 last night voted overwhelmingly to recommend approval of an amusement arcade in Great Kills and passed unanimous judgments in favor of two proposals, for a park in Arden Heights and a group home in Great Kills.

The arcade, located at 3965 Amboy Rd. in a shopping center at the intersection with Giffords Lane, consists of pinball and video game machines and has been operating for several months, according to Mario Candida, a member of the board's land use committee.

At a public hearing Jan. 6 one speaker spoke against the proposed permit application and submitted a petition containing 45 signatures. Later, the owner of the arcade submitted a petition containing 225 signatures in favor of the application. The petition included the signature of a priest of nearby St. Clare's R.C. Church who plays pinball there,

Candida said.

A lengthy discussion of legal points involving a declaration signed by the arcade owner in which he agreed to operate the establishment according to strict guidelines prescribed by the board ended with comments from board member Anthony Borowiec and second vice president Margaret Scotto-Lavino.

"One thing we severely lack on the South Shore is recreational facilities for our kids," Borowiec said, demanding that the board recommend approving the permit.

"We want our kids to have a place to go," said Mrs. Scotto-Lavino. "But every time we try to give them something people complain they're hanging out."

Several board members then echoed those sentiments, saying the issue should be decided immediately on its merits, and not tabled while minor technicalities were ironed out. The vote in favor of the arcade was 32 to 4, with one abstention.

The Arden Heights park proposal was the source of controversy at this time last year, when it was then proposed for a site in Annadale. Opposition from the community led to several months of meetings, during which the current site was chosen and the park's facilities changed slightly.

The board last night approved a motion read by Marcia Caruselle, chairwoman of the parks and recreation committee, recommending that the Park Department construct the park fronting Arthur Kill Rd. and adjacent to the former St. Michael's Home.

The park will contain a building to house the board and the Park Department's district office, and will also include locker rooms, toilets, space for storage of tools and maintenance equipment and a "multi-purpose" room to hold 75 people. The recreational facilities include five tennis courts, four handball/paddleball courts, baseball

and softball fields that will double for football and soccer, and two basketball courts. Parking space, benches, water fountains and security lighting are also included.

Ms. Caruselle said the parks committee plans a "phase II" for the park. Sometime after the initial construction, expected in 1984 or 1985, shuffleboard courts, a "kiddie play area," additional handball courts, baseball and softball fields and a gymnasium will be added.

In other business, the unanimous decision recommending approval of a building at 165 and 167 Dewey Ave., Great Kills, for use by the Association for Children of Retarded Mental Development as a group home, surprised even the representatives of that agency who attended.

"I would like to publicly thank this board for its enlightened action on this matter," said Rosemary Barrett, assistant director of the non-profit association. Ms. Barrett added that Community Board 3 was the first board she has dealt with in New York City that asked to have a member placed on the group home's neighborhood advisory committee.

Community residents had charged that the building was unsafe, but Joseph DiCapua, chairman of the board's health and hospitals committee, said the board's investigation revealed that no Health Department violations were recorded for the site, and a Building Department violation was removed in 1975.

The board also decided to request information concerning the dumping of dredge spoil from the Gowanus Canal in New York Harbor at the Fresh Kills landfill. According to Philip S. Iskowitz, chairman of the board and its environmental committee, tests showed that the dredge spoil was "unfit for ocean dumping" but acceptable for dumping on the landfill's "uplands."

Iskowitz also said the annual public hearing on capital budget items has been set for Feb. 18 in Susan Wagner High School, and any civic group that has submitted items to the board "should appear there in numbers to speak for those items. The squeaky wheel gets the grease," Iskowitz said.

—MICHAEL AZZARA JR.