

## Carrier poses little threat in Dongan Hills area

# Physician downplays hepatitis fears

By LORI WEINRAUB

A Staten Island physician and a spokesman for the city's Health Department tried to assure members of Community Board 2 last night that the risk of catching hepatitis from a retarded Dongan Hills man known to be a carrier is "extremely slight."

But several members of the board remained skeptical and expressed concern about the man's appearance in church and other public places.

The board requested an investigation into a complaint by the Dongan Hills United Civic Association in March that a resident at the Cromwell Avenue Residence, 158 Cromwell Ave., Dongan Hills, was allowed to attend church and receive communion although he was a known carrier of type B hepatitis.

Type B hepatitis is usually transmitted through the blood. Robert H. Snyder, hepatitis coordinator for the Health Department, said the man could transmit the disease if he is taking a certain type of medication that might make his gums bleed and if that blood came into contact with another person through a bite or a scratch.

Snyder said, however, that because the man is allowed to appear in public, it is highly unlikely that he is unable to control his emotions and would bite or scratch someone.

"If the man behaves responsibly, the risk of him transmitting the disease is not any more great than with a non-retarded carrier," he said.

Dr. Gerald Spielman, a doctor for the Staten Island Mental Health Society's Center for Developmental Disabilities, said it is safer to be around a known carrier than around an unknown one. He also said the man's retardation is irrelevant to the issue of his being a carrier.

He urged the board not to exclude mentally retarded hepatitis carriers from ordinary activities if non-retarded carriers are not excluded.

As for concern over whether a priest giving communion might transmit the disease from the saliva of a carrier to someone else, Snyder said the risk of transmission is so slight that it is more likely that a cold would

be transmitted that way. He also pointed out that priests give communion to thousands of communion to unknown carriers all the time.

In other business, the board voted to approve two of three requests for amusement arcade permits even though the board had been opposed to issuing such permits in the past.

The board approved requests for the Twilight Zone, in the K-Mart Convenience Center, 2845 Richmond Ave., New Springville, and after a somewhat heated debate, a permit for Masters Department Store, 2750 Hylan Blvd., New Dorp.

The debate was spurred by reports from two board members that they had witnessed overcrowded conditions and a lack of adult supervision when they visited the Master's arcade. The permit was approved on the condition that the arcade space would be expanded and/or another exit be built.

The board overwhelmingly rejected a permit request by the Victory Bargain Barn, 3555 Victory Blvd., Travis, because the building was illegally constructed.

Board member Steven Scallico argued that the board was being inconsistent in approving the requests because it had vehemently opposed them in the past.

But member Jack Deitch, chairman of the land use committee that recommended the board approve the permits, said this was different because of the location on the arcades and because the shopping centers have adequate security.

The board also approved a request to build an 80-bed addition and an outpatient day care center at the Eger Nursing

Home, 120 Meisner Ave., Egbertville. The board indicated that it would like the nursing home to set up deed restrictions on the unused portions of land, donating it for an open space zone to be included in the Greenbelt plan.

The board also heard a request from Patricia Powers, staff attorney for the New York Public Interest Research Group, that it support a bill that would establish a Citizens Utility Board to represent the interests of residential utility consumers on electric, gas and telephone issues.

Also, Chris Meyer, a spokesman for the Staten Island Bottle Bill Coalition, urged board members to attend a meeting April 30 between the coalition and Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly to seek her support on the bill.