

More group home beds are OK'd in Board 1 area

By DIANE C. LORE

Breaking their moratorium on group home beds, Community Board 1 members voted last night to approve a request by United Cerebral Palsy of New York State (UCP) to develop an apartment residence for up to four clients, and add clients to two existing apartment residences it operates in the board area.

In separate actions, the board also turned down a request for a zoning variance to open a disco and amusement arcade in the Fox Hills Shopping Center, Clifton, and reaffirmed an earlier request that the city Ports and Terminals Department abandon its plans to construct a proposed coalport in Arlington and Clifton.

The voice vote on the group home beds came after an hour-long debate on the issue. The motion was approved with the stipulation that UCP would agree, in writing, not to place any more clients in the Board 1 area.

UCP and the Borough Developmental Services Office came to the board earlier this month with a request to add a total of six clients to the board area by developing a four-bed apartment at 700 Victory Blvd., Silver Lake, for ambulatory clients, and adding one client to each of two apartments it already operates at 1000 Clove Rd., Silver Lake, for non-ambulatory clients. The board and the services office had agreed verbally last year to a moratorium on group home beds in the Board 1 area.

James Mates, chairman of the board's human resources committee, said that UCP already has three clients living at 700 Victory Blvd., and 10 clients living at 1000 Clove Rd., and that tenants had not objected. He said that he was assured by Keith Penman, regional director of UCP, that there would be no further placement of clients in the board area, if the board approved the application for an additional six clients.

Mates said that, according to figures supplied by the services office, Board 1 already has 3,100 service beds. UCP told the board that it would lose state funding for its existing apartments unless it added another client to each one, because the state will not fund apartment units with less than three clients.

Board members were divided on the issue, with some members taking the stance that the board did not have the "right" to decide where handicapped clients could live, and that another six beds would not make a significant difference in the area.

"These people have just as much a right to live in our board area as anyone else. We have no right to play God and tell them where they can and can not live," said board member William Busch.

But other members argued that the North Shore was "oversaturated" with community-based facilities, and that to break the moratorium on group home beds would set a precedent for other agencies.

"It's strictly a dollar problem. It's strictly to help UCP get a few more bucks from the state," said board member Mark Herman.

Patricia Marcéante said she was opposed to the motion because the board area was "oversaturated" with community-based care facilities. She noted that Board 1 already has the highest number of clients out of the Island's three community board areas.

In other business, the zoning variance denied by the board was to allow the conversion of three vacant stores into a combination disco and arcade. The disco would cover 9,000 square feet, and the arcade would cover 2,500 square feet. The shopping center has been in financial trouble since 1974, with two supermar-

kets, most recently a Waldbaum's, that have moved out.

At a public hearing on the application last month, Adolph Green, manager of the shopping center, said the center owes some \$220,000 in back taxes and must have a "money maker" in the center. He said that the arcade would not be open during school hours, and that youths would not be permitted in the disco at night. He also presented a plaque and petition with 500 signatures from the Parent-Teachers Association of nearby PS 57 in support of the arcade.

The arcade is presently operating in the shopping center, with 25 amusement machines, and was recently fined \$50 per machine for operating illegally. The fines were being held, however, pending the decision of the community board on the application.

Board members also reaffirmed an executive committee position to request that the city Ports and Terminals Department abandon plans for the proposed coalport.

The board's executive committee had drafted the motion over the summer, and had begun to poll the board by telephone. Board chairman Thomas LaManna said last night's vote was "to supplement the actions of the executive committee, which has the power to act on behalf of the full board" between regularly scheduled meetings of the board.