

# Tottenville residents oppose group home

By MARK LABATON

Nearly 100 Tottenville residents last night angrily voiced their opposition to a group home proposed in their area during a hearing conducted by Community Board 3 in its Princes Bay headquarters.

Residents said that, if approved, the facility for 10 adolescent and adult retarded persons would threaten their safety and create severe problems. In addition, they said, access to the home — proposed for 788-7770 Amboy Rd. — would be difficult for emergency vehicles in the winter. Many said Tottenville already had a group home on 750 Page Ave. and should not be burdened with another.

They also said that the residence was not a good location for mentally retarded persons because it was a few hundred feet from the shore. The proximity to the water was the only potential problem that board members mentioned after a tour of the facility last week.

Two representatives of the Sta-

ten Island Borough Developmental Services Office said the facility — for eight Staten Island Developmental Center residents and two community residents — was needed and would not threaten the community.

At its monthly meeting on Sept. 28, Board 3 members will vote on whether to recommend that the residence be used for a group home. Zygmund Slezak, commissioner of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, will then decide if the home should be established.

The board can recommend that the proposed home should not be opened by showing the home would will "change the character" of the existing neighborhood or is a half-mile from another group home for mentally retarded persons.

Early this year, however, the board was successful in halting development of a group home on Ionia Avenue, Annadale, on the grounds that using the facility for

that purpose would cause flooding and sewer problems.

According to Carol Rothfield, coordinator of site development for the Staten Island Borough Developmental Services Office, the proposed home is 1.4 miles from the group home for retarded persons on Page Avenue.

Speakers last night said that a teenage resident at a home on 5282 Arthur Kill Rd. for youths whom courts determine need supervision recently attempted to rape a 3-year-old.

"The fact that the above-mentioned group home (the facility on Arthur Kill Road) is not properly run has a direct effect on the acceptance of others if planned for the community," said Betty Sutherland, president of the Civic League of United Tottenville, whose statement was echoed by others.

But James Stanley, administrator for group center programs for the Developmental Services Office, countered by saying the Arthur Kill Road facility is different from that currently proposed.

He added that residents at the proposed home would be supervised "around the clock" by at least two persons.

Group homes, Stanley said, provide a better environment than institutions.

Some board members agreed with Stanley that the proposed home, unlike other group facili-

ties, was not a safety risk. William Russojello, for example, said "we must not confuse a person in need of supervision because he behaves poorly with someone who needs supervision because of some deficiencies."

And Joseph Dicapua, the second vice chairman of the board, said he would push for state legislation so the board would have the power to recommend where homes for troubled youths needing supervision should be built. However, he told Tottenville residents "that is a different type of clientele, and that is not what we are talking about here."