

Another group home OK'd for Tottenville

By BILL FARRELL

It was not without a fight, but Community Board 3 approved yesterday the establishment of a second group home for Tottenville.

With more than 20 local residents in attendance at the meeting at Richmond Memorial Hospital, board members argued passionately and sometimes loudly on the measure. The vote was 13-16 with six abstentions.

The home, which is to be located at 7768-7770 Amboy Road, is sponsored by the state Office of Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and will be run by the Staten Island Borough Development Services Office. When in operation, it will house 10 moderately to severely retarded persons, 16 to 35 years old.

MEMBERS OF THE Tottenville community have opposed the home because it would be the second such home in their area, while other South Shore communities have yet to establish their first such facility. Although the board has already approved group homes in Annadale, Oakwood and Great Kills, so far none of these are in operation.

Even with the approval by the board, the second Tottenville home will not be in operation until sometime next year.

"Everyone in this room was shocked when we first saw those reports about conditions in Willowbrook," said board member William Rusonello. "In 1978, we determined to do something about it. Now, four years

later we have the only home in operation. We have one home and we need 20. Now, we have a beautiful site, a good site for the group home. Let's vote for it."

Said Mario Candida: "We are not talking about stables for horses, we are talking about human beings. These are people who need a place to live."

Another board member, Neil Harwaine, who lives less than half a block from the site, also spoke in

favor of the home. "I don't think the state picked Tottenville to be dumped on," he said. "These are people looking for a home just like you or I would look for a home. And, I would venture a guess, they will be good neighbors."

After the vote was taken approving the home, some citizens in the back left the meeting muttering, "We were sold down the river again."