

Board 2 votes to support shelter for homeless at Willowbrook site

By JIM BUELL

In a surprise move, Community Board 2 last night voted to support turning over a building of the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook, for temporary use by up to 50 homeless Staten Island residents. The action marks the first time the board has supported a measure to house people without shelter.

The resolution, sponsored by Thomas Prisco, passed by a 28-to-8 margin after a motion to table went down to defeat. Philip Scampas, first vice chairman of the board, called the vote a "landmark," and Chairman Joseph Manifold said it marked one of the few times in which any measure passed after overcoming a vote to table.

However, the board has not yet consulted with officials of the state-run institution for the mentally retarded about the plan, and some members said privately after the meeting last night at Sea View Hospital and Home that the measure might ultimately prove meaningless.

Prisco, who chairs the board's health and hospitals committee, argued that "We are the last

board not to do anything about shelter for the homeless." He said his committee supports using part of the center as a temporary shelter because many buildings there are unoccupied and facilities for feeding are available. But other members sought assurances that no more than one building would be used, and that any shelter there would house only the homeless of Staten Island.

The board also heard a presentation by the City Planning Department on highway alternatives to mapped but un-built sections of the Richmond Parkway. Marilyn Mammano, director of the Staten Island office of city planning, told the board that unless a major Mid-Island highway system is built, traffic conditions will be close to a state of gridlock by the end of the century.

"The constraint on growth on Staten Island for the next 10 to 15 years is going to be traffic," Ms. Mammano predicted.

She and Thomas Paulo, project director for the department's Greenbelt studies, presented results of a recently completed

computer simulation of traffic conditions on major Island thoroughfares by the year 2000. The department, in conjunction with the Borough President's Committee for the Greenbelt, community boards and other local groups, is studying ways of protecting the Greenbelt as a city park while at the same time providing a traffic link. The Richmond Parkway, planned more than 20 years ago, has been largely discredited in ensuing years because it would slice through the environmentally sensitive Greenbelt area.

Board member Ben Pulice suggested that serious thought be given to how a Greenbelt city park would be made accessible to visitors, before a decision on traffic routes is made.

Paulo agreed that the Greenbelt would have to be made accessible. "Right now, only the healthiest people in the world can walk through there," he said. "The idea is to make this an amenity everyone on the Island can use."

(A Community Board 3 committee conducted a hearing on a group home proposal in Eltingville last night. The report is on Page B 5.)