

Connelly is raising roof on OK for homeless site

By MARY ENGELS

Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly (D-S.I.) lashed out at those members of Community Board 2 who supported using the Staten Island Developmental Center as a site for a shelter for the city's homeless without consulting anyone at the center regarding the matter.

An angry Connelly said yesterday that she was very upset by the board's decision.

"It was made without prior consultation with the center and apparently without regard for the welfare of the residents of the center," Connelly said.

Connelly, who chairs the Assembly Mental Health and Retardation committee, said: "For the past few years, a lot of time, money and energy has been spent improving the services and security of the Developmental Center.

"IT STRIKES ME as the height of irresponsibility for the board to publicly declare that this is an appropriate place for something that obviously is objectionable to the neighborhoods of the board area," she said.

"There is a growing feeling that these grounds are fair game for any project that is deemed unacceptable for residential areas. That is not the case and I will do everything I can to see that it stays that way."

The legislator said she supported the creation of a homeless shelter in her district but that she would oppose any other uses of the Developmental Center until it becomes clear "that the residents are guaranteed the best service and protection available."

Connelly said she was angry at what

she sees as the contradiction involved in public opposition to the establishment of group homes for individuals with disabilities as well as shelters for the homeless while at the same time it is being suggested that the center can be used for the homeless and other undesirable projects.

SHE CITED THE controversy over the proposed Eden 11 group home for autistic children in Annandale as an example of this contradiction. Connelly said she supported this particular group home as well as others that would be part of the court-ordered deinstitutionalization of the Developmental Center.

"As a public official, I am committed to the state policy of getting residents, where feasible, out of institutions and into group homes. Until the deinstitutionalization program is complete—and that would involve increased community cooperation—I cannot support the introduction of incompatible social programs into the center," she said.

When Community Board 2 passed a resolution supporting the use of the center for the homeless last week, Lillian Prado, the board's district manager, said at the time that "the state might not approve the site we identified but at least we have taken a first step."

Prado noted that Mayor Koch had asked each board to locate a site where homeless people could be housed.

"We've been racking our brains for over a year to find a spot where it wouldn't be right smack in the middle of a community."

According to Connelly, it is indeed in the middle of a community.