

Connelly has 'strong objections' to proposal for homeless shelter

Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly has taken "strong exception" to a recent call by Community Board 2 to open a shelter for the homeless on the grounds of the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC).

"The board could not have done any investigative research" before voting last week for a building at the Willowbrook site to be used temporarily by up to 50 homeless Staten Island residents, she said in a news release yesterday.

Mrs. Connelly, chairwoman of the Assembly's standing mental health committee, said she believed the vote to have been "without regard for the welfare of the residents of the center," and done without consulting center officials.

Joseph Manifold, chairman of the community board, responded, "The board's vote was for a feasibility study on it.

"The mayor requested community boards to give a number of sites that could be used for these purposes. Within Board 2, (SIDC) was the only one we could come up with."

Other sites were rejected by

the board's health and hospitals committee, he said, such as Sea View Hospital and Home and vacant lots that would have to have major construction.

"With SIDC being run by a state agency, we made a formal suggestion to Mayor Koch that a feasibility study or dialogue be begun between the city and state," Manifold added.

"We should be condoned and congratulated, not condemned, for eliminating the most costly possibilities ..." he said. Manifold said it was not necessary to consult with center officials on the matter.

But Mrs. Connelly 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 it stays that way."

She said she is "very upset" by an effort to dole out the land "willy-nilly" and that she does not believe the building would be used "temporarily" once opened as a shelter.

The West Brighton Democrat said she has answered a "a

stream of individuals and organizations lobbying" for various proposals by saying the state plans a comprehensive process, including public hearings.

Moreover, she said she was angry at a "contradiction" — between public opposition to the group homes for people with disabilities and the homeless, and suggestion that the center "can be used for the homeless and other undesirable projects," the statement said.

Mrs. Connelly, whose district office is on the center grounds, said she supports creation of a homeless shelter in her district.

There are approximately 1,000 disabled people still at SIDC. Under terms of a court-ordered extension of the Willowbrook Consent Decree, that figure is to be reduced to 250 by 1985.

But she said there is doubt as to whether the state office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities can meet that deadline or will have to apply for another extension.

Both sides in the dispute said yesterday afternoon they had not yet discussed their disagreement face to face with one another.

— DAN JANISON