

# Agency moving plans delayed

By WENDY GREENFIELD

Advance Staff Writer

A New Dorp agency's plans to open a new center for developmentally disabled adults have been delayed because the agency is having trouble buying the building it wanted.

A Very Special Place, a private, non-profit agency that serves 152 developmentally disabled adults by helping them to live independently, had planned to buy the Jewish Foundation School property at 20 Park Hill Circle, Clifton.

But the school's own moving plans were delayed. The state has rejected the school's application for a two-year lease, beginning in September, for a vacant building at the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC).

Thomas Tubbs, a spokesman for the state General Services Department, the agency in charge of deciding the fate of the more than 40 buildings to be vacated when SIDC closes in 1987, said the agency is still investigating alternatives for the property.

"We've made the decision that they (the Jewish Foundation

School) can't go in by September. Right now we won't lock ourselves into a two-year lease," Tubbs said yesterday.

The Jewish Foundation School wants to rent Building 19 at SIDC as a school for 500 pupils while plans are under way to build a new school in Willowbrook. However, school officials have been planning since 1979 to move to the Willowbrook property, but they have raised only \$500,000 toward its \$3 million goal for construction, according to Rabbi Chaim Feuerman, dean of the school.

Tubbs said there are many groups interested in the SIDC property, from environmentalists to developers. Allowing the school to lease one of the buildings for two years might set an undesired precedent, he added.

"Concerns have been voiced on the entire parcel of land by many people. There are so many questions still left to be answered," he said.

Moreover, the property is still under control of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD). The state General

Services Department will not make any decisions on the property until it acquires it from OMRDD, Tubbs said.

Rabbi Feuerman said the board of the Jewish Foundation School had explored other sites on Staten Island, but none materialized. "Right now if we can't rent Building 19 then we don't have an immediate prospect," he said.

He added that the school is still looking for a temporary building. In the meantime, school officials are preparing for overcrowded conditions for the fall term in the school's current building.

"We'll have to do creative utilization," he said, meaning the auditorium and the lunchroom would have to be used for classes in some cases.

The school's enrollment has increased sharply over the last five years, from 258 students in 1979 to 473 this year. Next year it is expected to jump to 500, the rabbi said.

The school wants to consolidate its three Island locations — it also operates schools in Willowbrook and Randall Manor — into one building and eventually

expand to include a high school. It now serves pupils from nursery school to the eighth grade.

The school had purchased an eight-acre plot of land at Caswell and Cambridge Avenues in Willowbrook about 10 years ago.

Meanwhile, A Very Special Place wants to open a new center to serve an additional 100 developmentally disabled adults, Genevieve Benoit, executive director of the agency, said.

"If their plan falls through then the whole thing falls through," she said of the Jewish Foundation School.

Benoit said the New Dorp agency at 241 New Dorp Lane wants to expand its services because it has grown significantly since it opened five years ago, and is now full to capacity.

"We have a waiting list and the (Staten Island) developmental center needs to place some people," she said.

The New Dorp center offers day and night training in basic living skills in addition to medical care. A new center would offer only day services, she said.