

(Corson's Woods), understandably with some disturbance to nature, seems to provide the desired cluster arrangement (of homes), screening and shading," the document concluded.

Stern asked at the beginning of the meeting to see a copy of the Facilities Development Corp.'s conclusions, and was rebuffed by a lawyer from the state attorney general's office who said he did not want to release the letter at "such a public meeting." Stern was told he could have a copy of the letter after the meeting.

"But the whole purpose of this meeting to is discuss whether alternate sites are available and we can't do that without see the documents," Stern said. "If that's your feeling, why not adjourn the meeting right now?"

When Stern made motions to leave, Walsh stopped the meeting to get copies of the report.

Stern also battled Walsh over the definition of community placement, and questioned why homes at Corson's Woods would be considered community residences while houses built several hundred feet away on Site 3 would not. Walsh said homes on Site 3 would face the private drive instead of Forest Hill Road; according to SIDC's agreement with the federal court, community residences for the retarded must face other homes in the community.

But Stern argued that the Corson's Woods site is still isolated.

"This site (in Corson's Woods) is located 300 feet across a heavily traveled road from other homes," Stern said. "I know what community placement is, and this doesn't seem to be it.



Discussing the proposal are Stern, left, and SIDC Director James Walsh.

"Do you believe that people from these homes (across Forest Hill Road) are going to interact with people from the group homes?"

Marilyn Mammano, Island planning director, said she was unimpressed by the two-page document from the Facilities Development Corp. in which the agency's staff listed their reasons for rejecting the other sites.

"They base their assumptions on factors that can be moved around," she said. "Given enough time to do some basic site planning, I can't see why we couldn't do something with one of these two other sites.

"There's no question that all of

us here want you to fulfill your court mandate," Ms. Mammano told Walsh. "But to base your decision on where to build the homes on this document seems a little shaky, if you ask me."

Walsh said even if proposal could be developed for the other sites, "I would strongly oppose moving the homes. Based on my experience, I really believe this (Corson's Woods) is the best place to serve our clients."

But Stern concluded that by building the homes there, "there's no question that the woodlands, for all practical purposes, will be destroyed.

"We are not persuaded that this is only alternative."