

Judge extends order halting SIDC work

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A temporary injunction preventing the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) from continuing construction in Corson's Brook Woods was extended yesterday by Supreme Court Justice Rose McBrien.

The judge imposed the temporary injunction until she rules on a request for a permanent injunction, which would force SIDC to relocate its construction of four group homes for the mentally retarded. She did not say when she will deliver that ruling.

However, a lawyer for the city parks and planning departments told the judge the city wants to resolve the matter through negotiations with SIDC rather than through further court action.

The city has decided to continue meetings with SIDC and other state officials. The meetings began Monday.

The request for the permanent injunction was made by the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, an Island environmental group that obtained the original injunction Nov. 11 after members found trees being cut down in Corson's Woods.

The 40-acre woodland tract, located on Forest Hill Road south of the Institute for Basic Research in Mental Retardation, is described as one of the Island's most environmentally significant woodlands.

The state-owned land is part of the Staten Island Developmental Center, which wants to build four group homes on nine acres of Corson's Woods. Site clearance for the construction began Nov. 9, although it was halted two days later by the injunction.

SIDC Director James Walsh has said he wants the group homes located there because of the site's proximity to a residential neighborhood, located on the other side of Forest Hill Road. Walsh has said other sites along

Forest Hill Road are not suitable for construction.

That stance has been contested by the Protectors and by the city, which joined the Protectors in the court action last week.

Officials from the parks and planning departments say the other sites along Forest Hill Road were not given serious consideration, and the group homes could be located elsewhere to save the woods. The two city agencies have advocated making the woods into a natural preserve, and perhaps transferring title of the land from the state to the city Parks and Recreation Department.

City attorney Priscilla Lundin would not expand on her comments to the judge yesterday about resolving the matter through negotiation. "What I said in court is what I meant," she said after the court session.

Officials from the parks and planning departments have already met with Walsh in hopes of resolving the issue, but without success. In that meeting, held Monday at SIDC, Walsh said he would not change his judgement that Corson's Woods is the best site for the group homes.