

# Residents blast board over Corson's Woods

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More than 200 Willowbrook residents sent an angry message to Community Board 2 yesterday, condemning what they contend is board's unofficial support of the demolition of Corson's Brook Woods.

A petition signed by 215 residents says the woods, located on the grounds of Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC), are threatened by the proposed construction of four group homes on the site. The construc-

tion has been halted by a temporary court injunction.

The residents also demanded better notice of future board meetings on community concerns.

In April, the board pledged to oppose any construction in the woods by voting to include the site in the protected area of Staten Island's Greenbelt.

Community residents, however, say the board in effect endorsed a plan for the construction of the group homes in the woods at its monthly meeting in

September.

James Walsh, SIDC's director, made an unscheduled visit to that meeting in order to present the proposal in vague terms, without stating when construction might begin. Walsh noted at the meeting that the homes do not require community board approval because they are to be built on state-owned land. Still, he sought and received a vote of support from the board.

Community Board 2 Chairman Edmund Murphy said last night that the board was not aware of

a final location for the group homes when it approved the concept.

"We were under the impression that a federal court issued a mandate that the group homes must be placed in or near the community," he said. "We also discussed a plan to place the rest of the land in the hands of the city for use as a park. We shared the concern of those who worried about the already damaged trees and look to plans that will save the rest."

At this month's meeting, the

community board declined to clarify its stand on the project. Members said it was not proper to take a stand on a matter being handled in the courts.

"The board met with Walsh in September and approved the plan without even informing us of the meeting," said Judith Berger, whose husband drew up the petition.

The controversy began in March when the Protectors of the Pine Oak Woods discovered the state's plans to build the group homes. At the time, Walsh

said the site, which will use only four of the woods' 40 acres, was selected because it was the only area of the SIDC campus which adjoins a residential neighborhood — an important factor in integrating group home residents into the community.