

# Corson's Woods opponents talk about compromise, but...

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Confrontation appears to be giving way to negotiation in the Corson's Brook Woods issue, as environmentalists, state officials and advocates for the mentally retarded grope for solutions in the year-old controversy over plans to build group homes in the woods.

And while the chances of a negotiated settlement seem slight, the current discussions may well serve to ease the bitter emotions which have surfaced during the debate.

Last week, state officials met with representatives of an Island environmental group which is suing the state over its plan to build four group homes in Corson's Woods, a tract on the south end of the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) property in Willowbrook.

Nothing was resolved at the negotiation session, but participants still expressed hope that a settlement can be reached before a court ruling on the lawsuit is handed down, probably next month.

Meanwhile, the environmental group, the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, has also made plans to meet with representatives from the Staten Island Regional

## Analysis

Retardation and Disabilities Council, a consortium of Island agencies serving the handicapped which has strongly backed the group home proposal. This meeting is apparently intended to soothe the raw feelings on both sides of the emotional debate, which some say has forced participants to chose between retarded people and trees.

But even as all the parties use words like "accommodation" and "compromise," no one has appeared to budge from the original positions — making the chances for a negotiated settlement seem remote.

The state is still determined to build the group homes in the woods — "No settlement would negotiate would include moving the homes," says Louis Ganim, spokesman for the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), the agency which wants to build the homes. And the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods are still committed to preserving Corson's Brook

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