

# Connelly helps block state funds

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ALBANY — Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly, with support from Sen. John J. Marchi, appears to have blocked state planning funds for the Staten Island Greenbelt.

Mrs. Connelly said her opposition to the funding stemmed from efforts by conservationists to keep the state from building group homes for the retarded on Willowbrook land known as Corson's Brook Woods.

Borough conservationists say the area should be protected from development.

Marchi, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said

last night "I backed her (Connelly) up on this issue."

Mrs. Connelly had met with and written to Marchi urging him to refrain from seeking \$1 million requested over three years by the city and the local environmentalists. The money would be used for a Greenbelt "master plan."

Her request came the week budget politicking began in earnest here for the \$39 billion state spending plan lawmakers enacted here early this month.

More than 25 special Island programs and projects were funded, costing the state better than \$2.5 million. But no trace of planning money for the Green-

belt was reported to be included in the budget documents, even after they were widely reviewed in recent weeks.

Marchi, however, insisted Greenbelt money is "still on the agenda."

Funds sometimes are reported "found," after a budget is enacted, in allocations made for one agency or another, and Marchi hinted this could be the case for the Greenbelt.

Connelly, D-West Brighton, indicated she is willing to support the Greenbelt request next year — but only after the dispute over the property is resolved "to the satisfaction of the disabled population."

Protectors of the Pine Oak Woods Inc., has moved in court against the state's development plans, alleging an incursion on the Island's planned protected areas.

A key decision in the case is due soon from a middle-level appellate court panel.

The group, meanwhile, wrote to legislators months ago urging the Greenbelt plan be funded.

Tom Paulo, administrator of the city's Greenbelt office, said when contacted yesterday it was "the first I heard" of the Connelly letter and her position.

As of last night, Paulo said, he still had not heard from elected officials whether at least \$250,000 requested for the first year of the "master plan" development might still be found somewhere in the complex \$39 billion spending plan approved by the Legislature earlier this month.

Paulo said two weeks ago that if the Greenbelt funding were not included it would delay the area's improvement. The funding has been sought for two years.

A while before the crucial budget negotiations began in earnest last month, Paulo said he met with Marchi to discuss the strategy of attaining the funds.

"I would say he was very receptive," Paulo said of Marchi in the meeting, "the point being that we're beyond talking about the Greenbelt. We're talking about making it a viable resource for the community."

Paulo also said Marchi and he discussed specific options for state funding. These included a possible direct allocation for the Greenbelt. Another option was to put a surplus into the state university's funding so that the Syracuse College of Forestry might find money to carry out the planning study.

"They're really separate issues," Marchi said last night of Corson's Brook and the Greenbelt plan. "But a lot of the people who are involved" have made it "one and the same thing," he said in defending his apparent shift on the matter.

"The planning money has some problems," Marchi said. "Although that portion of it (Corson's Brook) is state property, there might be snips of private interest. Primarily it's a city thing."

A Pine Oak Woods spokesman said, however, that Marchi has in the past consistently sup-

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