

ported state aid for the Greenbelt.

In the budgeting process, there develops what officials here call "member items."

These are grants of state money made basically at the request of individual legislators, giving the legislative member public credit for having attained a certain program or project for his or her district. Often, the member items most requested from the individuals of an area's delegation stand the best chance of inclusion.

Marchi noted the Greenbelt money became a "member item" that was actively opposed by a member of the Island delegation. "That makes it complicated," he said.

Mrs. Connelly, who as chairwoman of the Assembly mental health committee has power to review state services for the retarded, said in a letter to Marchi dated March 22:

"I am unalterably opposed to providing any funds from state coffers to enhance any phase of the Greenbelt program until the issue of the group homes at Corson's Brook is resolved to the satisfaction of the disabled population ..."

"...This land is not in the Greenbelt, even though it is their (Protectors) desire."

"It boggles my mind that in the enlightened age of ensuring that all public services and facilities be handicapped accessible, that we indeed be funding a program of such immense proportions with public dollars which will most certainly not be enjoyed by anyone but the most hearty hiker, much less anyone with a disability."

"Counter to this ideology," she said, "members of the Legislature, recognizing the shortcomings, are sponsoring legislation to provide funds for making certain parks handicapped accessible."

Copies of the letter were reportedly sent to Assemblyman Eric Vitaliano, D-Dongan Hills; chief city lobbyist Claudia Wagner; Henrik Dullea, an advisor to Gov. Mario M. Cuomo; Mental

Retardation Commissioner Arthur Webb, and Assembly Ways and Means Chairman Arthur Kremer, D-Long Beach.

Paulo said after hearing the contents of the letter, "We're dealing with the issue of not only handicapped access but a broad-based constituency."

Some borough conservation money, however, was included in the budget. Forty thousand dollars was earmarked in the final version of the budget for a master plan-management plan for Blue Heron Park, with plans to protect water and drainage systems there.

After budget allocations were put in print April 4, Marchi spokesman Gerald McLaughlin said Marchi "carried" the request for the \$40,000 "on behalf of" Assemblyman Robert A. Straniere, R-Dongan Hills.

For his part, Assemblyman Eric Vitaliano says he supports the Greenbelt funding and wants a quick resolution of the conflict.

Marchi, pressed about the merits of Connelly's argument, said "She's persuaded and I'm almost persuaded she's right... I thought she had the better of that argument."

"You don't want to slap her down on something as basic as this," Marchi added. "I suppose if we had pushed and shoved we probably would have gotten it in. But that's not in the balanced interest of the community, I think. In the long term we have to have consensus on these things."

Reached for comment last night, Ellen O'Flaherty Pratt, an official of the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, reacted to a reading of the Connelly letter by saying, "I find it hard to believe that one of our state legislators would feel that planning funds for the Greenbelt are not warranted at this time."

"The whole situation at Corson's Brook Woods is an unnecessary clash between two community-approved goals," Mrs. Pratt said. "We hope to work with Mrs. Connelly and our other state legislators to see that the needs of the retarded and the needs of people for a Greenbelt are satisfied." "Perhaps some Greenbelt funding can still be fitted in this year's budget process," she said.

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