

Hearing pits woodlands against disabled

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into the woods and no significant impact."

However, several environmentalists disagreed on this statement and most charged that the state could have sought other alternative sites.

Ellen Pratt, speaking as a member of the Council on the Environment of New York City, stated, "The environmental impact statement failed to justify destruction of this unique woodland wetland area."

A staunch Greenbelt supporter, Pratt said, "We have been informed that there are other nearby sites that can accommodate these facilities, such as the nearby Executive Way site on the land, and other open areas which would not involve removing woodlands proposed for inclusion in the Greenbelt."

Dick Buegler, president of the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, a leading Staten Island environmentalist group that took the matter to court earlier this year when it discovered "some 40 trees had been cut down in the clearing of the site for the proposed construction," said, "Protectors is not convinced that this hearing is the avenue to address the environmental concerns of Staten Islanders, relative to the planned continued destruction of the major portion of the upland mature forest of the woods."

BUEGLER called on the state

commissioner of the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, Arthur Webb, who was present at the hearing, "to hold a regular public hearing for permit application for the intermediate care facilities of the proposed Richmond complex, not a public comment session."

Buegler charged, "A limit of three minutes per presentation does not permit the Protectors, nor any other parks agencies and organizations to examine witnesses relating to the impact statement nor to submit sworn testimony."

Paul Kietzman, counsel for the state, said, "The agency had a choice of holding a hearing or not. They were not obligated to do so."

NEVERTHELESS, environmentalists continued to hammer home the point that the draft environmental impact statement was "inaccurate," and "insensitive" to the concerns of the environment.

Those making the comments included Tom Paulo, Greenbelt administrator; Kathleen Kimball representing the S.I. Greenbelt Stewardship Council; John Oppenheimer of The College of Staten Island; Terence Benbow, attorney for the Protectors; Deborah Sachs, board member of the Preservation League, and others.

Advocates for the retarded such as Harry Friedland, chairman of the Staten Island Regional Retardation Developmental Council, a consortium of voluntary agency service pro-

viders, consumers, and citizens concerned with the welfare of MRDD people of all ages, said, "The Corson's Brook Woods is indeed worthy of preservation, conversely it is also worthy of providing a beautiful environment within the community for those less fortunate."

REP. GUY Molinari (R-C-Staten Island) said, "Staten Islanders have shed many a tear for the cutting down of trees. But there are times when we have to sacrifice a few trees for a

good cause. On behalf of the residents I appeal to the state to put this on the fast tract for construction. These people have waited too long."

And Msgr. John Servodidio of Catholic Charities, summed it up by stating, "If you have to make a decision between two goods, a human being is higher than trees and animals."

A total of 55 speakers commented on the pros and cons of the proposed plan and the state will take written comments for up to 45 days.