

Staten Island

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Troubled waters over soil test at proposed group homes site

By MARY ENGELS

Within 10 hours after a state hearing on a proposal to build a group of homes in the Corson's Brook Woods, construction workers arrived on the site and began taking test borings and soil samples—prompting opponents of the project to protest that the work was “a violation of public trust.”

The public hearing was held by the New York State

Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities to discuss the proposed construction of group homes for clients in the woods, an “environmentally significant area.”

THEN, ON Wednesday morning, construction workers showed up. Members of the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, the environmental group that has been fighting the state, in court and at the hearing, over choosing this

particular location for the group homes, immediately cried, “Foul!”

The environmentalists have claimed that the woods are “in the heart of the Greenbelt,” and as such “should be protected and preserved as an environmentally significant area.”

They have also maintained that the state did indeed have other alternative sites on the 380 acres at the Staten Island Developmental Center and

did not have to choose the woods to build in.

UPON LEARNING of the construction work, Dick Buegler, the president of the Protectors, said, “We are outraged by the insensitivity of the state to forge ahead so soon after the public hearing process. They are going against their own State Environmental Quality Review Act which requires certain procedures and a set amount of time before proceeding with any action based on what comes out of those hearings and comments.”

Ellen Pratt, another member of the Protectors, called it “a violation of public trust.”

“We have sent a telegram to Gov. Mario Cuomo expressing our displeasure over these actions. The state's promise of no further action on the property has been broken.”

THE PROTECTORS are calling on Cuomo to intercede and permit the State Environmental Quality Review Act process to continue.

James Walsh, the executive director of the Staten Island Developmental Center, was also taken by surprise at the state's action.

According to Walsh, the Facilities Development Corporation, the state agency's construction arm, had given the go-ahead to the construction workers “as a normal site-development procedure.”

“They are simply taking borings and testing soil which is needed for consultants to then decide whether one can build on the site or not.”

WALSH ADMITTED, “Their timing stinks,” and he moved to stop the work.



JIM ROMANO DAILY NEWS

Work crews take soil samples at proposed construction site in Corson's Brook Woods.